

In daily life - towards imitation

Some people have a moment when they know they first surrendered to Christ, some don't. They always know they belong to Him. When I was 13, I definitely had a conversion – a time of saying, "I turn to you Lord," for the first time. But the interesting question is: did I make the decision, or was I drawn by the Holy Spirit? To be honest it felt like both. I was on a journey to the Lord, but at the same time his love was calling me. I had my intellectual questions, but there was also a movement in my spirit I couldn't resist. In my experience for many people it's the same thing – we are taking steps towards God, but all the while He is drawing us with cords of love...

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION

Read Acts 16: 11-15. Where do you see the principles of finding a person of peace in this encounter?

Read John 4: 1-23. How does Jesus model the principles here?

Living it out

Where do you need help with evangelism? How does the teaching about people of peace affect you? As a group could you do something together to engage with people of peace?

Prayer suggestion:

Identify together the people of peace in your life and pray together for them. Pray for the walk on Sunday that it could open doors for God's kingdom and we could have a good time together!

Joining a group and other resources:

We encourage everyone to join a group if possible. We have daytime or evening groups and youth cells. If you would like to know more, please visit our website, or contact Guy on 01423 504160. There are many great resources to help you pray and enjoy the Scriptures on a daily basis.

www.pray-as-you-go.org A 12 minute guided prayer and meditation to listen to.

<https://www.wordlive.org> Many excellent daily reading approaches, available as an app.

<http://www.sacredspace.ie/> A short guided prayer and meditation to read.

Or download the app from Soul Survivor, with short daily videos: <http://bible.soulsurvivor.com/>

INSPIRE

Everywhere...in everything



Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals. Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.

Week beginning: 19th April 2015.

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; In - to each other; Out - to mission

Up God loves you. God loves to give good gifts to all his children! Jesus tells us this. Say thank you to God for being such a loving Father.

In Count your blessings. Talk together about the many things that God has given you – a home, food, water, a family, friends, health, security, school (!)... See how many more you can think of. Write them down or draw some of them – making a long list or perhaps on different pieces of paper that you can stick around the house.

Out Boatloads of people. Many people who are unsafe in their own countries are fleeing – some making the dangerous journey by boat across the Mediterranean sea to escape. Some don't survive the voyage, and even if they do, their lives are not easy in a new country. Pray for peace in troubled nations like Syria and Somalia, so that people won't be driven out of their homes, and ask God for wisdom and strength for the rescue services and immigration services dealing with the huge numbers of people arriving by boat in Italy. Here is a link to one organisation helping:

<http://www.msf.org.uk/country-region/italy?gclid=COuY8qfR-MQCFa7KtAodv0EA6g>

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 20th April.

Readings: Psalm 96, Ephesians 1: 1-14. Focus verse: 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Tuesday 21st April.

Readings: Psalm 98, Ephesians 1: 15-end. Focus verse: 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Wednesday 22nd April.

Readings: Psalm 105, Ephesians 2: 1-10. Focus verse: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Thursday 23rd April. St George's Day

Readings: Psalm 126, 2 Timothy 2: 3-13. Focus verse: 3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

Friday 24th April

Readings: Psalm 107, Ephesians 3: 1-13. Focus verse: 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ...

Saturday 25th April. Mark the Evangelist

As we prepare to walk and pray around the parish tomorrow, let's pray: Almighty God, who enlightened your holy Church through the inspired witness of your evangelist Saint Mark: grant that we, being firmly grounded in the truth of the gospel, may be faithful to its teaching both in word and deed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

What struck you on Sunday from Karin's input?

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

The key to guilt-free evangelism. Going where the wood is dry. Luke 10: 1-11

Karin Shaw has been with us, as we continue to listen and discern how we can be a people who move beyond our walls and share the good news with those for whom church is an alien idea. But how do we move away from a notion of evangelism (spreading the good news of Jesus) that is guilt-based and guilt-ridden, and move instead into Jesus's way of sharing the good news, which is grace-based and spirit-led. We are all called to do this. In fact, research has shown that 9 out of every 10 people who come to faith do so because one person shares with them. Church events, meetings, programmes and strategies are the icing on the cake. Church is important – if it's done badly, it can be a barrier. But it's each of us reaching out and listening to God, that are the resource for growth.

But relax! The following teaching and example of Jesus is the most liberating, exciting instruction when it comes to faith-sharing. The key is finding the Person of Peace. In Luke 10:1-11 the disciples were sent to find the person of peace, someone open/receptive to the message, and a gatekeeper to their whole town/community. Stay with the person of peace, says Jesus, and you will reach their community. We need to move away from dragging people into our communities and actually work with people in whom God is working, and create new Christian communities around the person of peace and their network of relationships. 5 things which help us find the person of peace:

Time – Jesus precedes sending out the disciples in Luke 10 with an exhortation that there is a specific time when the harvest is ripe. You can't harvest at planting time or during the growing season. For whom is the time right? Which people, groups, cultural segments?

Team – Jesus always sent his disciples ahead of him in pairs. Who is on your team? Who can come alongside you as you answer this call? Paul had Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke and Titus. Jesus sent disciples out in twos. Who are we sharing and praying about evangelism with?

Target – Jesus knew he could not be everywhere at once, and neither could his disciples. He pointed his disciples to a target, the Person of Peace, the person who was receptive. Jesus was strategic in His outreach (lost sheep of Israel). We can concentrate on those who are receptive to us.

Task – Our task is to find the Person of Peace, and then share "the reason for our hope" with them. Luke 10 suggests they will welcome us, listen to us, and serve/support us (it's a two way thing, so we need to let them contribute in this way).

Trouble – Jesus recognized he was sending the disciples out as sheep among wolves. As we go out into the world looking for Person of Peace, expect trouble. If the teacher is not welcomed, don't expect that the students will be welcomed either. Our mission into the world has not changed. We may well get resistance or persecution – but we can simply "knock the dust from our feet" and move on in our search to find the person of peace.

You can study up on all the objections people have to Christianity and how to answer them. You can be ready with points, one, two, and three. You can be persistent because you believe a person needs to know Jesus and pull out all the stops, using every evangelism strategy you can find. But in the end, no amount of coercion on your part can make someone become a Christian. You can't make someone become a Person of Peace. That's the Holy Spirit's job. Your job is to have your spiritual eyes open so that when God puts a Person of Peace in your path, you recognize him or her.