



SMALL GROUP OUTLINES



TRANSFORMING POWER

These Small Group Outlines are produced by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview). They are available every month from our website.

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SESSION ONE:

OUTPOURING

In Session One we are introduced to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We see timid disciples transforming into powerhouses of the gospel and recognise that the same transforming power is available to Christians today.

SESSION TWO:

ADVENTURE

In today's session we join Paul on his amazing, and at times terrifying, adventure. Throughout it all he remained focused on his mission and spread the good news of Jesus to everyone he met. Choosing a life of adventure meant putting aside a life of comfort. What can we learn from Paul's travels and how can it help us to live our lives for Jesus? These are just some of the questions explored in Session Two.

SESSION THREE:

OPPOSITION

Following Jesus is not, and should not be, all plain sailing. Everywhere they went, the early Church faced opposition, and yet they stood firm in their faith. In today's session we will discover the kind of persecution they faced and reflect on how their story impacts our faith journey in today's world.

SESSION FOUR:

BEAUTIFUL FEET

In today's session we read a story that fundamentally changed the Christian Church for ever. Those previously excluded were welcomed. This new inclusion rocked the foundations of everything Peter thought he knew about God. He would never be the same again, and neither would the Church. As we discover more about Peter's faith journey, we are encouraged to bring the gospel of Jesus to everyone we meet. As the words of Romans 10:15 say, quoting Isaiah 52:7: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'


Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise or not share at all.

OUTPOURING

In Session One we are introduced to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We see timid disciples transforming into powerhouses of the gospel and recognise that the same transforming power is available to Christians today.

WELCOME

This month's youth small group sessions are going to focus on the amazing transformational power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

 There's one particular book in the Bible that is packed full of examples of the Holy Spirit's power. Which one do you think it is?

We're going to watch a clip that sums up the book of Acts in three minutes. If you want to do well in the follow-up task, then watch carefully.

 **Watch: 'The Book of Acts in 3 Minutes!'**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2t2tXVzlsq>

Afterwards ask everyone, individually or in pairs, to write down as many incidents/people that they can remember from the clip.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

As individuals or in small teams/pairs, ask group members to think of as many words as possible that they can make from the letters in the word TRANSFORMATION.

WORD

After 40 days together following Jesus' resurrection, Jesus left the disciples with a mission – to go and tell everyone about him ... 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19). But he didn't then just disappear up into Heaven and leave them to it. He promised them he would always be with them (28:20), in the person of the Holy Spirit. They were told to wait for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive all the power that they needed to fulfil their mission – to witness – after they received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was sent so that God would be with and within his followers after Jesus returned to Heaven. The Spirit would comfort them, guide them to know his truth, remind them of Jesus' words, give them the right words to say, and fill them with power. Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary – that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability and authority (*Life Application Bible*).

ACTS 1 & 2

Print out a copy of Acts 1 and 2 for each member of the group. Then, using different-coloured highlighters as you have available, ask each person to highlight the following things on their sheets:

Yellow: every mention of 'the Holy Spirit' or 'Spirit'.

Green: how the Holy Spirit is given – eg help, power, speaking in different languages, prophecy, miracles, repentance, etc.

Purple: what the Holy Spirit brought about in people's lives – eg help, power, speaking different languages, prophecy, miracles, repentance.

Orange: what reactions people had to the Holy Spirit – eg amazement, confusion, praise for God.

When the task is completed, consider each colour and discuss what the group has discovered.

BEFORE AND AFTER

The focus of our sessions this month is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. As we continue to look at the opening two chapters of the book of Acts, let's explore the 'before and after' transformation of the disciples.

Place a large piece of flipchart paper on the floor with a line down the middle. On one side write 'Before', and on the other side write 'After'. Discuss together and try to build up a 'before' and 'after' picture of the disciples.

For example:

Before: they were frightened, fearful of arrest and punishment by the Jews; the believers were together, maybe hiding out in the 'upper room' (John 20). **After:** this attitude of fear and doubt was reversed, turning into courage and the bold faith to preach to all people.

Before: the apostles were not filled with the Holy Spirit, and many of them wanted to have first place and be in control. **After:** everyone was united. Jesus had first place and he was Lord of their lives.

Before: they often didn't understand what Jesus was teaching. **After:** they were filled with wisdom and able to explain and stand up for the gospel with wise words.


ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Using the keyword search on Bible Gateway (<https://www.biblegateway.com/>) in the book of Acts, search for 'Spirit'. Depending on which translation you search, you should come up with around 65 references. Either split into small groups, or as one large group, look through some of the references to create a list of all that the Holy Spirit was involved in in the early Church. Create a large list, mind map or poster on a piece of flipchart paper.

Some examples are included below:

- * Acts 2:4 – Miracles.
- * Acts 4:8,31 – Gave the disciples boldness and confidence to preach God's word.
- * Acts 8:29; 10:19 – Gave specific instructions as to where to go, who to speak to and what to say.
- * Acts 9:31 – Encouragement and comfort.
- * Acts 13:52 – Filled the disciples with joy.
- * Acts 15:28; 16:6-7 – Making decisions.
- * Acts 19:6 – Speaking in tongues and prophesying.

WITNESS

 What do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

 **Watch: 3 Minute Theology 4:3: What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? (3:21)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0wWA-dUyDM&t=10s>

The clip gives baptism as an example of when we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Even though we don't baptise with water in The Salvation Army, it's still a good discussion point for your group.

“To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have the life of Jesus alive in us by his Holy Spirit in a real and concrete way so that he is prompting, guiding and directing us from the inside out.”

— THREE MINUTE THEOLOGY

DISCUSS

 Is this a normal part of your everyday Christian experience? If so, why / why not?

- 🗨️ Would you like it to be a part of your everyday experience, and what do you think that would look like?
- 🗨️ In what way did the balloon analogy help you to understand how the Holy Spirit works in our lives?
- 🗨️ What are some of the practical ways that the Holy Spirit works in our lives?
- 🗨️ In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit?
- 🗨️ In what area of your life would you like to experience the power of the Holy Spirit?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Discuss the following quote:

“Trying to do the Lord’s work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.”

— CORRIE TEN BOOM

WORSHIP

During the Witness section of today’s session, the group shared areas of their lives where they need the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. Listen to the track below and then spend time praying for each other.

📺 **Watch: Bryan & Katie Torwalt – ‘Holy Spirit’ (Lyrics) (5:49)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaRH0ItRfZg>

If your group would be comfortable with this, you could put one person at a time in the centre of the group and ask everyone to pray for them.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

As the group leader, you will already be regularly praying for your group. Sometimes it’s nice to know exactly when someone is praying for us. Commit to pray for each member of the group and allocate a day during the following week when they know you will be praying. Share this with the group and check in with them on their allocated day.

ADVENTURE

In today's session we join Paul on his amazing, and at times terrifying, adventure. Throughout it all he remained focused on his mission and spread the good news of Jesus to everyone he met. Choosing a life of adventure meant putting aside a life of comfort. What can we learn from Paul's travels and how can it help us to live our lives for Jesus? These are just some of the questions explored in Session Two.


WELCOME

Split into two teams and give each team a set of around six scenarios from the book of Acts to act out in charades style for their teams to guess, using usual charades rules.

Examples could include:

- * *Peter heals the crippled beggar.*
- * *The stoning of Stephen.*
- * *Saul sees a bright light.*
- * *Peter's vision of a sheet full of animals.*
- * *Paul and Silas in prison.*
- * *Eutychus falls out of a window.*
- * *Paul is shipwrecked and bitten by a snake.*

The winning team is the one that guesses all the scenarios the fastest!

 *Which of these adventures would you like to discover more about? Explain why.*

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Ask people to share one of the most exciting things that has ever happened to them or a time when they experienced a great adventure. What did it feel like before, during and after?

Alternatively, ask them to share their favourite action film/hero and why they like it/them.

WORD

The life of the apostle Paul demonstrates the amazing adventurous life we can have through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Before his conversion, Paul, then known as Saul, was a zealous Pharisee who persecuted the followers of Jesus. But Jesus broke into his life through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9) and he was completely transformed.




After committing his life to Jesus, Paul's most important goal was to tell others about Christ. This mission led Paul to have some extraordinary adventures. Many people became Christians through his life, churches were established, his message was affirmed by miracles and the word of God spread. Paul's ministry often followed a similar pattern in the towns and cities that he visited. He visited the Jewish synagogue, preached the gospel and many people believed. The word of God spread widely – but for various reasons, opposition also grew. In order to stay alive, Paul would have to move on quickly!

Paul experienced opposition from the religious leaders and was kicked out of cities, stoned, imprisoned, beaten, and at times was close to death. Through it all, he and his fellow missionaries knew they would not be stopped because the Holy Spirit sent them out and went with them. They were guided to the people and places by the Holy Spirit and were filled with courage and boldness. A life transformed by power is one of exhilarating adventure!

Split the group into pairs or threes and give each group one of the following Bible passages. Use discretion with your own group to decide how to share out the Scriptures.

Ask them to read the passage, make notes on key events and feed them back to the whole group.

To take it deeper, you could ask each small group to share some personal thoughts, such as:

-  What do you find most challenging about this story?
-  What would you have felt like in this situation?
-  Where do you see the Holy Spirit at work in this situation?

Acts 9:1–25 Paul's conversion, meeting Ananias, escaping Damascus in a basket over the city wall!

Acts 13:1–3; 14:8–20 Part of Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas in Lystra. Here Timothy became one of the converts. They healed a crippled man and the people began to worship them as gods, but Paul directed them to the one true God and many believed and were converted. Visitors arrived from Iconium to stir up trouble and Paul was stoned and left unconscious at the city gates.

Acts 16:16–34 Part of Paul's second missionary journey with Silas. Healing of the demon-possessed slave girl, thrown into prison, miraculous release and subsequent conversion of the jailer and his family.

Acts 17:15–34 Continuing Paul's second missionary journey, in Athens. The altar to 'the unknown god', Paul's evangelistic preach.

Acts 20:7–12 Part of Paul's third missionary journey, in Troas. Raising Eutycus from the dead.

Acts 27:1–2; 13–44; 28:1–10 Paul as prisoner on his way to Rome, voyage and shipwreck on Malta.

To enhance your discussion you could print out some maps of Paul's missionary journeys. It may also be helpful to have a modern-day atlas or map to compare to the Bible maps.

A selection of maps can be found here.

-  **100 Free Printable Public Use Bible Maps**
<https://www.bible.ca/maps/>

Alternatively:

First Journey (Acts 13:1 to 14:28)

-  **Apostle Paul's First Missionary Journey Large Map (biblestudy.org)**
<https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-first-missionary-journey-large-map.html>

Second Journey (Acts 15:36 to 18:22)

Apostle Paul's First Missionary Journey Large Map (biblestudy.org) (as above)

Third Journey (18:23 to 21:16)

-  **Apostle Paul's Third Journey Large Map (biblestudy.org)**
<https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-third-missionary-journey-large-map.html>


Paul's journey to Rome Acts 21:17 to 28:31

-  **Apostle Paul's Fourth Journey Large Map (biblestudy.org)**
<https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-fourth-missionary-journey-large-map.html>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

To discover more about Paul's conversion, watch the clip together and discuss as a group.

-  **Watch: NT Wright explains what really happened to St Paul on the road to Damascus. (4:15)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idZVUjRqSk4>

-  What do you think Tom Wright is trying to explain in the following quote?

“ ‘Simultaneously, all his (Paul's) life is fulfilled and all his life is shattered.’

— NT WRIGHT

WITNESS

Paul writes these words about his adventures:

²³⁻²⁷ I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummelled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard travelling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labour, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather.'

— (2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-27 MSG)

- 🗨️ How do you think Paul kept going through all these difficulties?
- 🗨️ Do you think we demonstrate this kind of resilience as Christians today? If not, why not?

Paul tells us that he heard the words of Jesus.

'Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.'

— (2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 NLT)

Earlier in the session we explored the many adventures of Paul. Imagine him contacting your small group.

- 🗨️ What do you think he would want you to know?
- 🗨️ What message would he want to get to your group?
- 🗨️ Do you think he would still write a letter? If not, what type of communication would he choose?
- 🗨️ What would he want to share about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit?

Working either individually or in small groups, ask the young people to create a message from Paul to their group, referring to his various adventures. They can choose what format this would take, eg email, group chat, or livestream to a social media platform. They could even go old school and write a letter!

- 🗨️ What challenges to action have you discovered as a result of this activity?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

“As the Church received the power of the Holy Spirit it was transformed from shell-shocked spiritual skeletons to confident, courageous Christians who witnessed to Christ's resurrection in downtown Jerusalem.”

— KRISH KANDIAH

- 🗨️ Which description do you most relate to? Is it the 'shocked spiritual skeleton', 'confident courageous Christian', or somewhere in between? Explain your answer.

WORSHIP

Encourage the young people to talk about their plans for the future. Challenge the group to think about how many of the responses placed following Jesus at the centre. Discuss the following questions with the group.

- 🗨️ Paul committed to a life of adventure following Jesus. In what ways are we willing to do the same?

- 💬 In what ways does following Jesus differ now from how it did when Paul was alive?
- 💬 Should it be different, or have we simply chosen comfort over adventure?

There is some debate over the origin of the book of Hebrews. At first 'credited to Paul for want of a better solution' (Wm Neil, *One Volume Bible Commentary*), its authorship has long been considered unknown, which is why it appears where it does in the New Testament canon – separate from Paul's other letters. Either way, it contains a message that is fully backed up in Paul's teaching.

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

— (HEBREWS 12:1-2)

As young people, you have your whole lives ahead of you. Do you want it to be filled with adventure or comfort?

Reflect on this question as you listen and focus on the lyrics of For King & Country in their song 'Fix My Eyes'.

- 💬 What advice do they have for young believers like you?

▶ **Watch: for King & Country – 'Fix My Eyes' (Lyric Video) (3:35)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXGuWHb5INk>

Discuss the group's reflections on the song lyrics. Take the time to pray with each other asking God for a Spirit-filled life of adventure. Encourage the group to commit themselves to a life of adventure with Jesus.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Bring the session to a close using the following prayer:

Jesus,
Help us to love like we're not scared,
Give when it's not fair,
Live life for another,
Take time for a brother,
Fight for the weak ones,
Speak out for freedom,
Find faith in the battle,
Stand tall, but above it all
Fix our eyes on you.
We ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can do all these things in the power of your name.
Amen.

(prayer based on the lyrics of 'Fix My Eyes' by For King & Country)

OPPOSITION

Following Jesus is not, and should not be, all plain sailing. Everywhere they went, the early Church faced opposition, and yet they stood firm in their faith. In today's session we will discover the kind of persecution they faced and reflect on how their story impacts our faith journey in today's world.

WELCOME

Our starter activity is a word association game. Ask the group to sit in a circle. The first person starts with any word they wish that has something to do with the book of Acts – eg Paul. The next person repeats the first word and adds another word which links to the first – eg shipwreck. The next person repeats the previous word and adds another word link – eg danger, and so on. To keep this moving, allow only five seconds for each word link. See how many linking words your group can get.

WORD

After Pentecost, the message of the resurrection of Jesus spread rapidly in Jerusalem as Spirit-empowered witnesses shared the gospel with the lost. Signs and wonders accompanied the preaching of the word, and no one could deny that God was at work in a new way among his ancient people. But not everyone was happy with the success of the Church. The 'religious establishment' that had opposed the ministry of Jesus, and then crucified him, took the same hostile approach towards the apostles. 'If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also,' said Jesus. 'They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God' (John 15:20; 16:2 NIV). These words were beginning to be fulfilled. (The Weirsbe Bible Study Series: Acts)

The death of Stephen (Acts 7) was the signal for an outbreak of persecution which compelled the Christians to scatter and to seek safety in the remoter districts of the country. However, the apostles stood fast. They braved whatever perils might come. The apostles were passionate about sharing how Jesus had transformed their lives. We see that believers were beaten as punishment, but left rejoicing for being counted 'worthy of suffering' for Jesus! They spent time in jail and were slandered by the community leaders.

Jesus actually said that we're bound to face opposition for following him, but that we should be pleased because of it (Matthew 5:11-12). We may not get beaten or put into jail, but we can't expect everyone to react favourably when we share our faith in Jesus. We can expect some negative reactions.

Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Ephesus:

'Last of all I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you.'

— (EPHESIANS 6:10 TLB)

Read the following Bible passages together. If you feel there are too many here for your group, then choose a selection. You can also refer back to the Scripture passages about Paul's journey adventures found in Session Two.

Acts 4:1-4	<i>Peter and John before the Sanhedrin</i>
Acts 5:17-21	<i>The Apostles persecuted</i>
Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60	<i>Stephen is martyred</i>
Acts 8:1-8	<i>The Church persecuted and scattered</i>
Acts 12:1-11	<i>Peter's miraculous escape from prison</i>
Acts 13:44-52	<i>Paul and Silas in Pisidian Antioch</i>
Acts 21:27-36	<i>Paul arrested</i>

Draw a Venn diagram on a large piece of paper, as shown below. Write 'Believers in Acts' in the left-hand circle and 'Us' in the right-hand circle. After the group has read the Bible passages, discuss what difficulties the believers in Acts faced living as Christians and telling people about Jesus. Ask the group to write these in the left-hand circle.

Then ask the group members if they find telling others about Jesus and their faith hard.

💬 What things do they find particularly tough?

💬 What difficulties and challenges do they face following Jesus in their world?

Write these in the right-hand circle.

As you discuss, write anything that applies to both in the central overlap of circles.

Add the Venn diagram from the original document.

To aid follow-up discussion, divide a large sheet of flipchart paper into four. In the boxes write:

- * Who?
- * Why?
- * How?
- * What?

Focus on the opposition faced by the believers in the early Church. Using the following discussion questions as a prompt, fill in the four boxes.

💬 Who was opposing the believers in Acts?

💬 Why did the believers face so much opposition?

💬 How did the believers respond to opposition and persecution?

💬 What got them through the hard times?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

💬 What is your response to the following quote?

“The Bible clearly says that faithfulness and persecution often go hand in hand.”

— BILLY GRAHAM

WITNESS

Having spent time reflecting on the persecution faced by the early Church, we are now going to focus on our own Christian experience in our current context.

💬 What kind of opposition do Christians in the UK face today? Share your own experiences.

Divide a large sheet of flipchart paper into four. In the boxes write:

- * Who?
- * Why?
- * How?
- * What?

Focus on the opposition we face as believers today. Using the following discussion questions as a prompt, fill in the four boxes.

- Who opposes believers in the present day?
- Why do believers face so much opposition?
- How can we respond to opposition and persecution?
- What will get us through the hard times that we face?

Ask each person to create some action points that they feel will help them respond to and deal with any opposition or difficulties they may face at home/school/work etc.

Read the following passage from *The Message* paraphrase, then ask each person to use it as a basis of their own prayer. In their own words their prayer can communicate how they will stand strong for Jesus in the face of opposition. Pray for each other to be filled with strength, courage and boldness by the Holy Spirit.

‘We’ve been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we’re not demoralised; we’re not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we’ve been spiritually terrorised, but God hasn’t left our side; we’ve been thrown down, but we haven’t broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us – trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us – he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus’ sake, which makes Jesus’ life all the more evident in us. While we’re going through the worst, you’re getting in on the best!’

— (2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-10 MSG)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

- Watch: Persecution of Christians (NT Wright Q&A) (3:44)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb3bpmsfUgo>

- What have you discovered from Tom Wright’s teaching about the persecuted Church?

WORSHIP

Today we are going to spend some time praying for the persecuted Church across the world. As you watch the following clip, jot down the countries mentioned and specific prayer points.

- Watch: Open Doors World Watch List 2023: Top 10 Countries (3:54)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t3Wc9lWwQ4>

Open Doors create one of these clips each year, so you should be able to find the most recent version if you are not completing these sessions in 2023.

When the clip has finished, spend time in prayer together as a group for those facing persecution across the world. Ask each group member to choose a country and pray for them over the coming week.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

As you reflect on everything you have discovered today, listen to the words of Rend Collective’s song ‘The Cost’.

- Watch: Rend Collective – ‘The Cost’ (2:26)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqLRMPCVS8o>










BEAUTIFUL FEET

In today's session we read a story that fundamentally changed the Christian Church for ever. Those previously excluded were welcomed. This new inclusion rocked the foundations of everything Peter thought he knew about God. He would never be the same again, and neither would the Church. As we discover more about Peter's faith journey, we are encouraged to bring the gospel of Jesus to everyone we meet. As the words of Romans 10:15 say, quoting Isaiah 52:7: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'



WELCOME

Print out a selection of pictures of a variety of different people. A PDF is provided to get you started, but you can always add your own. Spread the pictures around the room and give the group a couple of minutes to look at them all. Bring everyone to the centre of the room and read out the questions listed below. After each question, group members should go to the picture that they feel answers the question for them. Stress with the group that there are no right and wrong answers! Ask some of the group members to explain briefly why they have chosen the picture that they did.

Questions

-  Who would you most like to be friends with?
-  Who would you be least likely to be friends with?
-  Who scares you the most?
-  Whose life story would you most like to hear?
-  Who do you feel most sorry for?
-  Who do you think would like you the most?
-  Who do you think would never be interested in God?
-  Who do you think needs Jesus the most?
-  Who do you feel you would most like to pray for?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  What was your decision-making process for answering the questions and choosing the pictures?
-  In what ways did the response of others in the group factor into your decisions?

WORD

We often have our own set opinions or ideas about other people. Sometimes this can even present itself as prejudice towards others. We form opinions based on tradition, upbringing, or even fear and worry. It's our natural inclination to feel uncomfortable around people who are different from us and gravitate towards those who are similar. As the early Church grew, the believers' long-held prejudices were put to the test as a wide range of people from varying backgrounds began to follow Jesus.

Let's catch up on the story from Acts 8-12, before we focus on our Scripture for today.

-  **Watch: The Apostle Paul: Acts 8-12 (5:59)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiVAbkINtRU>

Peter's vision from God, and his experience with Cornelius, threw into question everything he believed.

Using Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18 as the main Scripture reference, discuss the following questions with the group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Who was Cornelius? What were he and his family like?
- What was Cornelius told to do?
- Why was Peter on the roof of the house at noon?
- How did God prepare Cornelius for Peter?
- How did God prepare Peter for Cornelius?
- What would have been the consequence if Peter or Cornelius had not obeyed God?
- Describe the vision that Peter had. Why was it alarming to him?
- Why do you think Peter's vision is repeated three times?
- How did Peter, and those who had come with him from Joppa, know that the Holy Spirit had fallen on the Gentiles?
- What was the reaction of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem?
- How did Peter answer the objections of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem?

We have just read one of the biggest moments in the book of Acts. Back in Acts 1:8, the risen Christ said that he wanted the news about him to spread throughout Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Like ripples spreading out on a lake, the gospel had been spreading out amongst the Jews. Now, here in Acts 10, the gospel had broken through an enormous barrier on its way to the ends of the earth.

We often read in Acts how the apostles were compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to a certain place to chat to a certain person (or people) about Jesus' love for them. When we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, we too will find that we are compelled by Jesus' love to tell others about him. We may feel that this is beyond our natural ability – and it often is – but the Holy Spirit within us makes 'all things possible' (Matthew 19:26).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If you would like to continue the discussion, based on Acts chapters 10-11, then questions are provided below:

- What are some of the things we might notice if God is working on a person's heart to bring them to faith?
- What is God's promise to everyone who seeks him?
- What barriers/prejudices in your life keep you from telling others about Jesus?

WITNESS


Read this extract from a web article entitled 'The Holy Spirit and Mission' together.

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the Church. The Spirit is also active within the lives of people outside the Church, indeed within all of creation, though some may not recognise who it is. John Wesley supported this view in his theology of prevenient grace – God already at work in our lives before we are aware of it. Many of us would testify that long before we made a commitment to follow Christ we had a sense of being sought by God in some way. We may not have expressed it that way at the time, but as we look back we can see how God by his Spirit was drawing us to himself. Mission becomes more exciting and seems to have more purpose when we approach it with an understanding of the prevenient and ongoing work of the Spirit. We live in a society in which people's search for spiritual direction and meaning to life is frequently experienced in places other than the Church.


When we accept the idea that the Holy Spirit is at work outside the Church (as well as within it) we adjust our approach to Christian mission.

I believe that our society is longing for genuine signs of hope and transformation. These can be experienced through engaging in contextual, holistic approaches to mission, initiated, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Advances in mission do not spring from education, planning, committees or conferences. They do spring from God's determination to work through his people by the power of the Holy Spirit AND our commitment to follow his lead and join in his mission.

https://methodistevangelicals.org.uk/Articles/523266/The_Holy_Spirit.aspx?redirected=1

 What key points stand out for you in this extract?

As we considered in Session One, Jesus promised the disciples they would receive power to witness after they had been filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit's power is given to us to help us share the love of Jesus with those around us.

 In what practical ways does the Holy Spirit help us to do this?

Read Romans 10:12-15.

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

— (ROMANS 10:12-15)


 In what way do the questions in this Scripture challenge you to share your faith with others?

Ask the group to draw out three footprints on a piece of paper. If you are really adventurous you could even ask group members to draw around their own feet or make footprints with paint! Then ask them to write inside each footprint in response to the following questions. Remind the group to be sensitive to others in how they record their answers. They could use initials or write/draw something that only they would recognise to identify the person.

Footprint one: Think of one person that you usually avoid or possibly find it difficult to be with or talk to. Next time you see them, how can you make an effort to talk with them and be interested in their lives?

Footprint two: Think of someone you know who effectively shares the gospel. What qualities do you see in that person?

Footprint three: What characteristics and qualities do you have that make sharing the gospel natural for you? What makes it difficult for you to share your faith?

 As you reflect on each footprint, what one thing can you do to share your faith with others?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If the group would like further pointers on how to share their faith, then watch and discuss the following clip together.


 **Watch: Jason Clark – Sharing our Faith – Vineyard Insights (2:16)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SixROtRkuU>

WORSHIP

In Romans we read these words:

'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'
— (ROMANS 10:15)

As part of our prayer time, we're going to listen to a song that sets these beautiful words to music.

 **Watch: 'Beautiful Are the Feet' – YWAM Kona – Reissa Waddell (6:06)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUbK9e1jgE>

If your group are able, then you could simply play the song/video and allow people to pray as they wish in response to the song and all that you have discussed in this session.

Pray for each person to be transformed by power and filled again with the Holy Spirit.

Pray that each person begins to sense the 'compelling' of the Holy Spirit to reach out to others and tell them all about our wonderful Jesus!

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Bring the session to a close by praying that the group would be filled with the Holy Spirit to share the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.