



Joining in with the Spirit: Session 2 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

1. Intro slide
2. What is our mission?
3. God is working to “bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ....the re-creation of the world, when the Son of Man will rule gloriously.” ① To ‘restore all things’. (Acts 3:21) It is not that the church has a mission, but that “the mission of God has a church”.
4. At ① the heart of Birmingham the George Cadbury story is about someone who joined in with the mission of God in such a way that it touched every aspect of his life and has left a legacy of what society might look like when God’s reign – His kingdom – is experienced.
5. Shona “...over the years has introduced hundreds of children to Jesus. She has taught them to pray, shared biblical stories with them, introduced them to Christian worship and has engaged them in Kingdom activities including the support of Fairtrade and providing gifts for other children by filling shoe boxes with toys. ...Shona is not ordained or employed by the church. ① She is a primary school teacher faithfully doing her best to follow Jesus and bring transformation to the lives of the children she serves and the community in which the school is set. All at the same time as equipping their children with the learning skills necessary for life.”
6. What might discourage us from seeing our daily work as part of God’s mission?
7. *We can grow up with the sense that certain activities matter less to God.* Decades ago, Dorothy Sayers wrote, ① “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.” *Or we can absorb the idea that certain callings are more acceptable expressions of discipleship.* Sister Wendy Beckett : ① “I now know of course that you can be a bus conductress or a television person and love God completely.”
8. This can lead to us having a split view of life and God’s mission. We can split life up into ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ and as churches, we can reinforce this sacred/secular split-living. When a teacher says, ① “I do Sunday school for one hour a week, and my church get me up to the front and pray for me. I teach 30 children for 39 hours a week and no one ever mentions it in church,” we see this split-living and thinking.
9. Why might we struggle with joining in with God in everyday life?
10. Simeon Stylites was a monk who lived on a 60 foot pillar situated thirty miles from Antioch in a sun-scorched wilderness. Simeon’s view of the world and what it means to be ‘spiritual’ affected his whole approach to life. He believed that the world, and therefore his body, was essentially evil – a corrupted creation in need of redemption. The purest form of discipleship was therefore to be removed from the earth (literally 60 feet above it!) in order to be closer to God and await rescue from matter. If you had asked him what a Christian approach to art, education, politics, food, sexuality, business was, you know, all those things God has *created* – he would probably have replied, ① “They are at worst essentially evil, and at best distractions from the real business of life, which is following God alone.”
11. It is common among religions to see the body as something to ‘escape from’. But...*The path you take through life is shaped by where you think your destination is.* A common misunderstanding is the belief that ultimately the earth will no longer exist, and instead our souls (without our bodies) will go to be in a place called heaven when we die. ① If this is the case, the main aim of life becomes preparing for heaven and winning souls for God. The earth is simply the *temporary stage* on which this is played out. *We will come across issues where knowing what to do might not seem clear cut, and we struggle to work out what a Christian ethical response should be. We may ask in a general sense whether work should be experienced as a blessing or a curse.* ① All these questions may make it very tempting for us to *compartmentalize* life into parts in which God is involved, and those in which He is not.

12. What was the original task God gave us?

13. After God and human beings rested on the seventh day, God gave Adam and Eve their task. This first task shapes a big part of what it means for us to be made in God's image and describes the focus of the daily existence God made us for. "God blessed them and said to them, ① 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'....He brought (animals) to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name." (Genesis 1:28; 2:19) ① God gives humans *genuine influence* in how the world develops – we name the animals. While we are not *equal* co-creators with God, our participation is meaningful, and honoured by God. ① We are made to "rule over" and "subdue" creation in the sense of protecting it and keeping destruction at bay.
14. Most fundamentally in terms of our daily work, God makes human beings to be "fruitful...fill the earth" by *unlocking the potential* that He has placed within the world. This of course means creating humans, but it also means so much more. He places them on the stage and says "Act! Use whatever you can to bring glory to my name. ① Fill the earth, not just with babies, but with music, creativity, technology, learning, art, architecture, parks, photography. Make it interesting." ① Stewardship is *more than maintenance*, more than keeping things ticking over until he comes again.

15. What is going to happen to the earth and our daily work?

16. God will *restore* the world, not rescue us from it. God's mission is more like Spiderman than a fireman. A fireman will rescue people by *getting them out* of a dangerous place and taking them to a safe place. A lot of people think that Jesus came to take them from a nasty place – earth – to a safe place – heaven. To get them out before the whole thing goes up in flames. But that is a worldview which can lead us to abandoning any sense of real purpose for being on this earth whatsoever. If redemption is about waiting around to escape, what's the point? Jesus was much more like Spiderman. Spiderman's mission is to *get rid of the enemy* so that the people can once more live in safety and peace *in what was originally a good city*. ① The mission of God aims to bring healing to every aspect of life. Everything has been created and will one day be redeemed.

17. How does God's mission include helping us recover our original task?

18. Part of resurrection hope includes a promise that our *original human task will be completely restored to us* in the life to come. Paul promises Timothy, "'The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.'" (2 Timothy 2:11–13) ① "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (Matthew 25:21)

19. What happens to the fruit of our work when God renews all things?

20. God's mission to restore the world is not a *return* to the Garden of Eden, before human beings were able to make any changes to the world, but a *renewal* in which everything we do in our lifetimes, which reflects His goodness, will be included in God's future. This is why the renewal of all things is shown as a *city*, and not a restored garden. (Revelation 21) It is a promise which *includes human work*. When John describes this future "city", he writes how ① "...the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it." (Revelation 21: 24) In other words, all that is a true reflection of human worth is brought in.

21. Are some things sacred and some things secular?

22. The Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper famously said, "There is not one square inch of creation over which Christ does not say, 'It is mine!'" Every part of life belongs to God, every part can be spiritual. To call some things "sacred" and other things "secular" creates a false gap between areas of life God created and those we think He did not. There is no job or world in itself that is purely 'secular'. However, any area of life made by God can be going in one of two *directions*. It can be reflecting and shaped around the goodness of God's kingdom – such as George Cadbury's approach to business. Or it can be shaped around the values of the present world, as if God has nothing to do with it. To be secular literally means to be *only shaped around the values of this particular age* or world. So while nothing God has made can be secular in itself, it can still be heading in a *secularised* direction. Every sphere of life can be lived according to God's rule, or not. Instead of calling things 'sacred' or 'secular' it is more helpful to ask, ① "How is this aspect of life or my work originally good?" and "Is the direction it is going reflecting God's kingdom, or is it being secularised?"

23. What is my calling and how do I know it?

24. In joining in with God's mission, every disciple has a calling from God, and there are no callings that are more or less important than others. To think that those who have callings within the church sphere have a 'vocation', while those who have a calling to God's mission in a hospital do not, creates a destructive split in our individual lives, but also in the church. The truth is that most of God's mission occurs as disciples serve their callings *outside* of the gathered church community. Discovering our own particular calling can need prayer and advice from others, but Frederick Buechner's definition makes 'vocation' into something which can bring joy and resonate with the way we have been made and gifted. He writes, ① "The place God calls you to is the place *where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*" In other words, if I ask myself, "What makes me happy?" and, "Which needs do I care about in the world?" the answers to those two questions will point to our God-given calling.

25. How do I celebrate ordinary, everyday things well?

26. Finding ① God in the ordinary things of life becomes much more possible when we remember He has created every aspect of life. In his book 'No Splits' Steve Shaw describes how laying a table for dinner with friends can be a joyful response to God, handling all the "ingredients" of God's creation in a holy way. Celtic Christians, with their emphasis on heaven overlapping with earth, have a long history of celebrating God in the ordinary things of life. This prayer, by Bruce Prewer, in a Celtic style, offers a farmer's daily work to God:

27. Bless, ① Lord God, my little plot of land, and the strength with which I'm tilling it, bless the seed I'm carefully planting, and the prayers I'm sowing with it. Bless the seasons that are coming, and the sunshine and the rain. Bless the days and shortening nights, and the hopes of my small barn. Bless, O Father of good giving, Bless, O Son of redeeming. Bless, O Spirit of the living, Bless, O Holy Three all-loving.

28. How can the Good News transform daily life and work?

29. The three stories, two real and one imagined, in the content booklet – of John, Randy Lewis and Walgreen's and a reimagined football club demonstrate how joining in with the Spirit in a workplace, while involving prayer, witness and kindness, has the potential to bring transformation at every level – reflecting God's 'cultural mandate' and bringing healing to what is broken.

30. How can my church reinforce the value of everyday faith in God's mission?

31. Here are three particular opportunities. **Praying and supporting.** Ruth's story shows how the prayer and support of her church enabled her to stay in a difficult work environment and witness to Christ. ① **Prayer and chaplaincy in the workplace.** We are all "chaplains" in one sense, but the chaplaincy team in Birmingham shows the value of networking and praying with others – and the ecumenical advantages this can bring.

32. Learning to change with others. We are all on the journey but making the changes to place God's mission in everyday faith at the heart of being church can be a challenge. As we have seen, we are seeking to undo habits and thought-patterns which are centuries old. In Church of England Birmingham we offer a very practical response to any church which wants to develop in this way. We get small teams from our churches together ① over a two-year period in a learning community to help each other address this. Journeying together, we seek to put seven changes in place over two years which will help our churches be increasingly growing into valuing every calling, and seeing every disciple as equally called. These changes will depend on where people are starting from, but they cover the things we do, the people we encourage in leadership and ministry, and the choices we prioritise. A handout explains the scheme in detail.