



Joining in with the Spirit: Session 3 – 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. Why is discipling others and sharing faith challenging?

3. THE Revd Jemima Prasadam is a priest who likes to talk, but her style is less to preach from the pulpit than to build a community by chatting to anyone of any faith she meets on the streets. ① “I don’t know if I have talent for striking up conversations; I am just being myself,” she said. “Jesus talked to people, even about the most mundane of human things.” ① Three times in the New Testament Jesus tells us to, “Go and make disciples.” As we have seen, to join in with God’s mission is the *end point* of being an apprentice. If we are being with God, and becoming like Christ, we will *naturally* reach out as Christ did.

4. We have seen that the first two marks of mission (which lead on to the other three) are to “proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom” and “to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.” We have also seen how a spiritually healthy life has an “out” dimension, as well as an “up” and “in”. ① If worship is our highest calling, then mission is our most urgent assignment. Sherry Wedell challenges us by saying. ① “...the parable of the lost sheep is reversed today: ninety-nine sheep have gone off and one remains in the sheepfold. The danger for us is to spend all our time nourishing this one remaining sheep and not have time to seek out those who are lost.”

5. Many things might have contributed to a lack of confident witness – society has become more diverse and we feel unsure about how to “proclaim” anything, whether faith-based or not. ① But we all carry a message about what we believe through our actions and words. If we choose *not* to share faith, we are still saying *something*.

6. How is discipling others joining in with the Spirit?

7. Every ① significant part of our faith development is the work of the Spirit. ① No part of us can develop without God’s help. So... ① **It is the Spirit who shows us our need for God’s grace** and gives us an accurate picture of God and ourselves. ① **It is the Spirit who helps us see the truth about who Christ is.** ① **It is the Spirit who enables us to put our trust in Christ:** Paul wrote: “No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3) ① **It is the Spirit who assures us that we are God’s children.** ① **It is the Spirit who grows the character of Christ in us** (the fruit of the *Spirit*). This means that we have the freedom of knowing that, while we have a *part* to play in discipling others, God does all the *heavy-lifting*. And because God is at work in everyone, long before we meet them, rather than needing to ask, “How do I do this?” a better question might be, ① “Where is God *already* at work in this person, and how might I notice or encourage it?”

8. Humanly-speaking, what kind of relationships help people come to faith?

9. **Jesus ① almost always worked in groups.** Jesus always sent His disciples out at least in pairs to join in with His mission. ① **It was and is the life of the community that speaks loudest.** At its best, faith-sharing isn’t an activity we do, but flows out of *who we are* as a Christian family. Elaine Heath writes, “...the expression of loving community is the greatest apologetic for the gospel.” ① **The early church showed commitment to those around them and were radical in including people.** In a community in which in Christ there was no difference in status between “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28) the sight of seeing slaves and their owners in an equal relationship must have been extraordinary.

10. A notice from outside a church in Wales captures the flavour of this attitude of openness: “We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, dirt poor. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying new-borns, skinny as a rake or could afford to lose a few pounds... ① .We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid or got lost in the one-way system and wound up here by mistake. We welcome tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts.....and you!”

11. How do we practise hospitality?

12. Famously the Son of Man came: ① “eating and drinking.” (Luke 7:34) Perhaps rather than asking, “How could this person come to church?” a good starting-point might be, ① “How might this person encounter church over a table?” Two other principles are helpful in how we practise hospitality. ① **Deliberately seeking to offer hospitality to those who can’t offer it back.** One of Jesus’ parables puts it plainly: “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.” (Luke 14: 12-14) ① **Receiving hospitality.** Jesus frequently ate at others’ homes and was unafraid to ask for help. In doing this, we meet others as equals and demonstrate that we are not the answer to any needs they might have.

13. What is evangelism?

14. We read the words “witness” or “evangelist” over 20 times in the book of Acts. The good news is about so much more than ‘getting people into heaven’. In fact, it is more about ‘getting heaven into people’. In simpler terms the good news is Jesus’ invitation to “Follow me.” In essence this will mean presenting Jesus and inviting people to allow Him to be at the centre of their lives. Archbishop William Temple wrote, “To evangelise is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that people come to put their faith in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour and to serve him as their King in the fellowship of his Church.” However, because God always meets people very differently according to their need, responding to Christ and embracing God’s kingdom *will start with different emphases* depending on people’s situations. For some, it may mean being aware of the depth of God’s love and forgiveness, for others it may mean a much more intentional need to turn away from a lifestyle, for others it may mean surrender to Christ as Lord.

15. Is every disciple an evangelist?

16. As we have seen, we all carry ‘news’ of some sort whether we intend to or not. And in a real way as a church community we *are* the message. It is equally true that everyone needs the opportunity to hear and understand before they can respond. Paul wrote: “As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” “And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?” Jesus gave the task to *all* his disciples to be disciple-makers – no one was excluded. (Matthew 28:16-20)

17. But it is also clear that there are people who have a specific gift of evangelism within the church. It is one of the particular five gifts Paul says Christ gives to His church to carry out His mission. (Ephesians 4: 7-11) While not everyone is gifted with this ministry, we all get to be witnesses. Jesus described *all* His disciples as His witnesses taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. A helpful way of understanding the heart of a witness comes from Peter who wrote, “Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:16)

18. How do I grow in *wanting* to share faith?

19. A bookmark offers ‘Helpful reasons for and attitudes in mission and faith sharing’. Some Missionaries of Charity (Mother Theresa’s order) in Dallas, USA, unashamedly share faith with people saying, “We would never coerce anyone...But we always do these things for Jesus, and we tell people about him....The basic ministry is prayer.” They use mostly silent prayer contemplating the love of God in front of the sacrament. *This is how they receive the love they need to give to the people.* “We could never do what we do if we did not pray this way,” she told us. “It would be too hard.”

20. How did Jesus show His disciples how to share faith and what can I learn from that?

21. Jesus knew He could not be everywhere at once, and so *focused* His mission. Neither did He go to everyone or respond to every request. In addition, not everyone responded to His offer – and He didn’t force them. The key principle is that He sent His disciples out to look for those who were “of peace”. “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where He himself intended to go.... Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.” (Luke 10: 1-6) Because only the Holy Spirit can prepare someone to receive good news, the first step in sharing faith naturally is always being aware of when people are able to be “of peace” towards God, at any given moment. You might be able to relate to this – there may be, or have been, times when you are more open to God’s loving presence in your life. Jesus and the disciples started with the people who welcomed them, listened to them, served and supported them, and were warm to them. Jesus said that when you find a person who is warm towards God, stay there. We should not force dialogue or relationships where they do not naturally flow. He even warned his disciples against being distracted by those not ready to receive their message. (Luke 9:5 and 10:4) Paul did the same. On arriving in Philippi Paul set out to find a person of peace. He knew where to look and found Lydia. He stayed there and planted a church. (Acts 16) We can show God’s love through our words and actions to everyone, but if people are not “of peace” we must be careful not to put pressure on them.

22. Why is sharing my story so helpful?

23. In a context of so many different voices and points of view around us our *experiences* have more credibility than our ideas and can help point others to the presence of God. If we get the opportunity, the best way of telling our story is naturally and spontaneously. But some people might find that having a framework can help us to know how to start. Further materials available include an example of someone’s story, and a bookmark of some possible ways of shaping how we share our faith.

24. How do I help if someone wants to become a Christian?

25. Helping someone come to faith always means finding out where God is already at work and starting from where they begin. Three useful questions which can help us engage with people are: ① **Who are you?** (Lovingly listening to their story...find out who they are, rather than first offering your story.) ① **Where are you?** (Finding out where they are with faith/God/spirituality/church – again, honouring them and working out whether they are “of peace” at the moment.) ① **Why don't you?** (What's the next step along the way that would be helpful? It may be coming to church, or going on a course, or it may be as simple as having a coffee together.)

26. Whether or not we have begun to follow Christ through a process or an event, for many people this assurance involves a definite moment in which there is an inner and an outer response to God. If someone asks us, “How do I become a Christian?” ① the inner response is to help them “repent” i.e. to turn away from being at the centre of their own life, and “believe” i.e. put God at the centre by surrendering to Him. ① But this will start with different emphases depending on their situation. ① Simply offering to pray with someone expressing these two attitudes, in whatever language is appropriate, will help them step into the assurance of being in Christ. ① The outer response, which expresses publicly and tangibly the identity and calling of a disciple, is baptism.

27. Why does baptism matter?

28. To be ① baptised is to be immersed. As the time of Jesus' arrival drew near, groups of Jewish people combined this sense of wanting to be cleansed and set apart for God with a commitment to the new thing He had promised. Some started to baptise themselves (sometimes daily) as a sign that they wanted to be set apart for God and ready for the new thing He was going to bring to the world. They were preparing a “highway for the Lord.” No Jew saw baptism as a ‘magic’ thing that washed sins away – it was a sign of what God was doing in the *heart*. ① But it *outwardly* expressed that they had *inwardly* turned to God and wanted to be set apart for His purposes. ① Baptism was not an optional extra, but an outward sign which showed an inward change. The bookmark, ‘What Baptism Means’ unpacks its significance in more detail.

29. How do I make disciples?

30. The bookmark ① ‘Starting Points for Sharing Faith and Discipling Well’ lays out in a simple way an outline of how we might start to accompany people well on their discipleship, using some of the tools in the course. Using the bookmark as a resource to get you started may hopefully build confidence in supporting others. As it reads at the bottom, ① “People don't need a perfect example. They just need a real one.”

31. How do we share faith naturally with people of other faiths?

32. Andrew Smith's book, ‘Vibrant Christianity in Multifaith Britain’ sets out from a Birmingham context many of the issues we might face in sharing faith with those of other faiths. He writes, ① “... the vast majority of people are not sitting around waiting to be offended by Christians talking about what they believe but are quite happy to chat about faith.” He offers some principles as a way of engaging well. ① **Holding together being confident in loving people and being confident in loving God.** He argues that loving people of other faiths involves being able to share faith with them: ① “We are called to love our neighbour of any faith and at the same time to be faithful in loving God. A friend of mine who is a leader in the Sikh community often says that ① if we want to do interfaith well, then we should do faith well. We should make sure people are rooted in their own faith so that they can contribute well in interfaith settings.”

33. **Loving ① people enough to go to them where they are** ① “It's worth reminding ourselves every now and then just how much God loves the Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and others living near us or appearing on the news. However much we might learn to love our neighbour, it will never be as much as God loves them...Do I want people to listen to me talk about my faith? If the answer is yes, then I need to do the same to them and listen to them talk about their faith. Do I want people to visit my church? If so, then I need to be willing to visit their gudwara or mosque.” ① **Being genuine, equal in relationship and honest** “People sometimes ask me how they can start a conversation with their Hindu friends. I say start by asking, ‘How are you?’ Treat them as people, be interested in them, love them.” ① **Sharing faith positively and humbly.** Andrew has worked with others across Birmingham of all faiths to produce some guidelines for ethical witness (see handout).

34. He summarises his approach to sharing faith with others in a story: “I was once at a meal with some young adults of different faiths. During the meal the issue of conversion came up and a Sikh friend turned to me and said, “I understand that if you saw someone who had no faith and was down on their luck, homeless and a drug addict, that you'd want them to become a Christian, but do you want me to convert?” My answer was this: ① “I think being a Christian is the best thing ever; I find it gives me hope and purpose and an assurance of salvation, so I'd love everyone to find that too. So, yes, I'd like that for you, but no more than for anyone else; you're not a target. ① But also it's optional. I'm not going to force you to convert; you're allowed to say no. And another thing: if you want me to shut up about my faith I will.”