

Flourishing Faith in Later Life

A six-part series to explore the opportunities to embrace all that God has for us in this stage of life.

Presbyterian
CHURCH IN IRELAND

Welcome to

Flourishing Faith in Later Life

In the Bible we are reminded that as followers of Jesus we can flourish in later life. Because of our relationship with Jesus, and in fellowship with other believers, we can continue to grow strong in our faith, have purpose in the church, and bear fruit – including introducing others to Jesus.

Psalm 92:12-15 puts it like this:

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
planted in the house of the Lord,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
proclaiming, 'The Lord is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'

This six-part series is designed to remind us afresh of God's outrageous love for us, to consider with others the things that may be hindering our flourishing, and to explore the opportunities to embrace all that God has for us in this stage of life, for his glory and for the salvation of others.

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1. My identity in Christ:
Who am I now?



Entering into the theme

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

As our circumstances and the world around us increasingly change over the years we can begin to wonder, "Do I really know who I am?" Later life transitions such as retirement, changes in health, or the loss of familiar roles can leave us questioning our sense of identity.

Reflecting on our identity in Christ reminds us that our worth isn't tied to what we do but to who we are as God's beloved children. This can anchor our confidence in God's unchanging love, helping us grow closer to Jesus by helping us to see ourselves through his eyes.

Let's open in prayer together
Heavenly Father, thank you for gathering us together today. We invite your Holy Spirit to be with us as we open your Word. Grant us wisdom and understanding to own your truths and apply them to our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

When we are asked who we are, we can answer with a combination of things as varied as...

I'm a teacher, I'm an electrician, I've got this great hobby,
I'm Sally's husband.

I'm Pat's mum, I'm a homemaker, I'm a Liverpool supporter,
I'm an elder in my church.

I'm a widow, I'm a member of a choir, I'm a grandchild-minder,
I'm a provider.

I'm a Yorkshireman, Scot, Nigerian, Irishman, Londoner, an Australian.



Talk about:

- How might all of these change as we get older? How have your answers to the question, 'Who am I?' changed over the years?
  Think especially about retirement, changing family dynamics, bereavements and so on.
- Imagine you're meeting someone for the first time.
  As the conversation starts, they say, "Tell me about yourself."
  How would you answer them? What would you say about yourself?

Exploring what the Bible says

In Luke 15:11-32 there's a story that gives a great answer to the question, 'Who am I?'.

Let's read Luke 15:11-32 together.

It would be interesting to know how the younger son might have described himself if asked. His response would probably have changed dramatically over the years, from before he left home, through his time in the foreign country and after he returned home.

Talk about:

- How do you think the younger son would have answered the question 'Who am I' at different points in his life?
- The older brother was very different from the younger brother. He stayed at home and worked hard on his father's estate. How do you think he would have responded if someone said to him, 'Tell me about yourself'?

Jesus told this parable, among many things, to teach us that, for a Christian, the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' is, 'I'm a child of God who is deeply, deeply loved by him. Like the younger son, he runs to meet me and embrace me. Like the older son, when I'm standing outside cross and frustrated, he comes out to welcome me in.

As a son or daughter of the King of kings, unlike the two brothers, my inheritance is not material possessions, but redemption in Christ and inheritance to his glorious kingdom.

This parable reminds us that despite life's seasons or circumstances, who we are in Christ – a beloved child – never changes.

Talk about:

- How might this parable change how you see yourself now?

Expressing what we've been thinking about

As a group, make a list of ways in which God shows he loves you very much – this could be a combination of personal testimony and examples you find in the Scriptures. Consider God's gift of creation; the people who are part of your life, especially people who have helped you through the years; look at the gospels.

More if there's time

Have a look at the hymn, Loved with everlasting love. Here's the first verse:

Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know;
Spirit, breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so.
Oh, this full and perfect peace!
Oh, this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.

Can you write another verse or two for Loved with everlasting love? Perhaps include one that begins with the line, 'I am loved so I will love...'



Closing prayer

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with a very great love. You have come looking for us when we were far away and when we were just outside but distracted. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came to rescue us and gave your life to pay the price for our rebellion. Because of this, we thank you that we can draw close to you, our loving Father. Amen.

Explore at home

What difference might it make for me to know that who I am is rooted in my relationship with Christ and his purposes for my life?

If you don't already, this is a great time to begin to write down your reflections in a journal, a notebook or even an app. To get you started, take a little time on two or three days, look up the references below and jot down your thoughts about these before we next meet.

Jeremiah 31:3	*I am loved with an everlasting love*
Matthew 5:13-14	*I am the salt of the earth, the light of the world*
Acts 1:8	*I am a Spirit empowered witness of Christ*
1 Corinthians 3:16	*I am a temple of God*
2 Corinthians 5:17-21	*I am a bearer of the good news of reconciliation*
2 Corinthians 6:1	*I am God's fellow worker*
Ephesians 2:10	*I am God's workmanship*
Ephesians 2:6	*I am, even now, seated with Christ in the heavenly realms*

2. Prayer and devotion:
How can I know Jesus more deeply?



Entering into the theme

[Jesus] said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' Mark 6:31

Later life can provide more time than the busy years of work and family, to deepen our relationship with Jesus through worship, prayer, reading Scripture, fasting and contemplation. Yet for some, the loss of routine or ongoing family demands actually makes this harder.

A rich devotional life helps us step aside from daily concerns, rest in his presence, and return refreshed, with renewed faith, vision and a deeper friendship with the Lord. This theme offers guidance for cultivating regular habits that draw us closer to God, inviting us to see this season as a unique opportunity for intimacy with Christ.

Let's open in prayer together

Lord Jesus, thank you for bringing us together today. As we talk and explore together, stir our hearts with a deeper love and devotion for you. Help us to be transformed by your word and teach us how to walk closely with you every day. Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Revelation 3:20

In this verse we are reminded that God desires a close relationship with his beloved children and lovingly waits for us to 'open the door' and spend time with him. No matter how long you've followed Jesus, this is still his desire.

Christians have long believed that regularly setting aside time to be alone with Jesus is not only a precious time of fellowship with our heavenly Father, but essential for emotional and spiritual health.



Talk about:

- How we do this will look different for each of us, but we can draw on helpful disciplines to keep our devotional life vibrant. What are some of them?
- If Jesus knocked on your front door tomorrow and had an hour to spend with you, how would you welcome him, get to know him better, and invite him to speak into your life?
- Think it through for a couple of minutes and then share with the group.

Exploring what the Bible says

Jesus had a regular devotional life, both alone, and with others. It's not known how it developed through the years of his earthly life, how much he owed to his earthly parents' guidance or how much was a direct gift of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus knew that a regular time alone, in conversation with his heavenly Father was crucial for his life and ministry, how much more is it necessary for us to spend regular, good quality time alone with God?

Here are two glimpses into Jesus' devotional life from the gospels:

> *But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.* Luke 5:16

> *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* Mark 1:35

Talk about:

- At this time of your life, what time of day works best for you to spend time with God? Why this time? What place works best, and why?
- What else do you think we can take as guidance for our devotional lives from these verses?

Let's read Luke 22:39–46 together.

Jesus' experience in Gethsemane is the most fully described of his devotional times. He simply poured his heart out to his Father, with complete honesty.

Talk about:

- What does he pray about? Apart from the glimpses we have in the gospels, what else might Jesus have prayed at this time?
- Pouring our hearts out can bring rest. God never turns away; he listens and answers in love. Have you ever had a time of prayer when you were 'deeply moved'? Would anyone like to share their experience with the rest of the group?

Expressing what we've been thinking about

Most of us will be familiar with regular practices and spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, tithing, serving, thanksgiving, sung worship, and studying and memorising Scripture.

Throughout the centuries Christians have been developing a broad range of methods to help us do these including:

- Examen
- Christian art
- Poetry and journalling
- Solitude
- Developing a Rule of Life

Discuss two or three of these methods that you're familiar with and one that's new to you. Take some time now to pray for each other.

More if there's time

Read John chapter 17 together.

What does this tell us about Jesus' prayer life?
What can we learn from it about how we pray?

What does Jesus' prayer life tell us about him?
What might our devotional life say about who we are?

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, we want to walk closely with you. We want to get to know you better. We want to be open to hearing your voice speaking warm and loving words of comfort, guidance, admonition, peace. Help us to guard our times alone with you so that we can worship you and have our souls nourished by your loving grace and rise from them to love you more deeply and serve you more faithfully. Amen.

Explore at home

Try keeping a personal prayer diary for the next week using headings such as:

- Worship and adoration of God
- Expressing gratitude for his goodness
- Praying for
  - a family member
  - a friend
  - your church
  - a neighbour
  - the nation
  - the world
  - yourself

Remember to notice and give thanks for answered prayer.

Why not try one or two of the other devotional methods that you discussed in your group. Try something that you've never tried before, then share in the group if and how it's helping you to draw closer to God.

3. Dealing with disillusionment:

Staying the course through loss and change



Entering into the theme

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:15–16

Many older people face the reality of multiple bereavements, broken families, financial pressures, illness, boredom and loss of purpose or independence. Our poor response to these issues can lead to bitterness, unforgiveness and apathy, which can be an obstacle to our flourishing and our gospel witness.

Reflecting on this theme can help us to process pain and change in a Christ-centred way, holding onto the hope of resurrection, his comfort, unending presence, and power to transform us.

Let's open in prayer together

Gracious Father, we come before you with open hearts, knowing that you understand our struggles and sorrows. Thank you for Jesus, our High Priest who walks with us in every trial. As we reflect on loss, change and disillusionment, fill us with your mercy, hope, and sustaining grace. Guide our thoughts as we learn and share together and bring us your comfort and strength. Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

Life is full of hopes and dreams, some of which are realised, some of which aren't.



Talk about:

- Reflect for a few minutes together on the hopes and dreams you had when you were young.
- Consider the expectations you may have once had for your family, studies, career, hobbies, friendship circle, economic status. How did you imagine your life would be?
- Are there any hopes and dreams that have not been fulfilled as you once thought they would be? Are you still praying into these or how do you manage your thought life around these and those that have been broken altogether?

Exploring what the Bible says

The Bible doesn't minimise the pain of long-term disillusionment, including years of illness. In Mark 5:24–34 we meet a woman who understood this very well.

Let's read Mark 5:24-34 together.

This poor woman suffered a dozen years of discomfort, embarrassment, loneliness and financial exploitation by charlatans. If ever a woman was disillusioned, it was her. Yet, when she comes to Jesus, she comes full of faith, believing that just by touching his cloak, she would be healed, and she was!

Talk about:

- How do you think her life would have been different after that day?

Not everyone will experience physical or emotional healing in this life, and that can be difficult to accept. But we must trust that the Lord knows best, his ways are higher than our ways, and he will be with us through every circumstance of life, even if we continue to experience suffering.

Talk about:

- What does Jesus say to us if we are not healed?

Whether we're healed or not, like this woman, bringing our weakness to Jesus can open new doors for us. There was one thing that couldn't happen to the woman. She couldn't go back to regain the years that had been lost. However, she could go forward into a new life transformed by faith in Christ. This new life would be informed by her life before she met Jesus and empowered by her new relationship with him.

Talk about:

- How can we remain steadfast in prayer and hope if our physical or mental health declines?
- How can we apply this same approach to other unfulfilled expectations in our lives?

Expressing what we've been thinking about

Here are some examples to help us consider what it means to live through loss and change:

- 2 Corinthians 1:3–4
- 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
- 2 Corinthians 12:7–10
- Psalm 34:18

Imagine you are writing a handbook of encouragement for people in later life together. Based on what you've been looking at today, what top tips might you include for older people as we navigate disillusionment and look for hope in our later years?

More if there's time

The angel's words to Mary in Luke 1:28 are magnificent: *"Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."*

I wonder if sometimes, right up to her son's death, Mary wished it had all been different, that she had just been the wife of a carpenter and the mother of children who were all the same as the other children in the village. We can only guess, but as Acts 1 shows, there's no turning back. She cannot re-live the years that have passed but she can go on into the future.

Read John 19:25–27.

Jesus' care for his mother comes in the middle of the shattering of her dreams for him and extends beyond his resurrection for the rest of her life. As he hung on the cross, first prophesied by Simeon, her soul was 'pierced' and her hopes were destroyed.

Talk about:

- What do Jesus' words on the cross tell us about how he felt about his mother?

Jesus was doing two things when he spoke these words. First, he was making sure that his mother was provided for in the future. Second, Jesus was giving his mother a new role in his disciple John's household and community.

Talk about:

- What might this role have involved for Mary?



Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, you knew suffering and rejection, yet you also knew resurrection and victory. Thank you for walking with us in our hardest times, redeeming what feels lost, and giving us hope and life that cannot be destroyed. Amen.

Explore at home

Take some time to pray about the areas of your life that you're struggling with. Be honest with God about any areas of disillusionment and invite the Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage and guide you as you journey with him.

Think of some more top tips for a handbook of encouragement for people in later life. Share them with your group leader so we can begin to create a leaflet of hope, filled with wisdom and scripture to encourage those facing disillusionment, and to remind ourselves.

4. Strength for the journey:
The hope of heaven



"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."
John 14:1–4

Entering into the theme

As we grow older, the reality of our mortality becomes harder to ignore, prompting us to reflect more deeply on what may unfold in the season leading up to our death, the moment itself, and what lies beyond.

Considering this topic together helps us to view dying and death through the lens of Christian hope, bringing comfort and peace in the promise of God's unwavering presence in the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. It offers the blessed assurance of salvation and a secure inheritance with God, removing the dread of death's finality and cultivating a confident anticipation of being with him forever.

Let's open in prayer together
Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together today. As we study your Word, remind us of the hope we have in Jesus – the one who conquered death and prepared a place for us in heaven. Give us strength for the journey, peace in the face of our mortality, and joy in the promise of eternal life with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

We know that human beings do not go on for ever on this earth, whether it is through physical death, or Jesus' promised return. As the saying goes, "nobody is getting out of here alive". But like everyone else, Christians often have mixed feelings about this.



Talk about:

- Why do you think that is?

At the same time, the Bible is clear that for believers the death of the body is not the end. Christians possess eternal life now that continues, through death, into perfection, as we go to be with Christ.

Talk about:

- Do you believe this? And how would you explain it to someone who doesn't yet follow Jesus?

Some of us may have had the privilege of spending time with a believer in their last moments or perhaps we've heard the stories.

Talk about:

- What biblical truths might we reflect on that would enable us to welcome the approach of the end of our lives?

Exploring what the Bible says

In Job 1:21 Job said, *'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.'*

This is a wonderful verse.

Talk about:

- How do you think Job was able to reach such a position of peaceful acceptance?

Let's read Romans 5:1-5 together.

Our faith in Jesus equips us with everything we need for the journey ahead.

Talk about:

- What do these verses tell us about Christian hope?
- How is hope developed in our lives?
- In what ways can you see God's love being 'poured into our hearts' in your life?

Read Philippians 1:20-27a.

Paul was torn between continuing in his earthly life and being in heaven with Jesus.

Talk about:

- Do you ever feel Paul's dilemma in your own life?

Even through our frailties, God has a wonderful purpose for our lives.

Talk about:

What do you think God has for you to do before you go to be with him in heaven?

Expressing what we've been thinking about

Read Revelation 21:1–7 aloud together.

Christians can look forward to heaven because it means being with Jesus, made whole, in a restored creation where love, justice, joy and life finally and fully endure.

Talk about:

- When thinking about heaven, which of God's promises in Scripture are you most looking forward to claiming as your own when the time comes?
- What else are you hoping for?

As a group, gather short answers on small cards or slips of paper and add them to a jar to make a 'jar of hope'. Pass the jar around, inviting each person to read a 'hope' out loud before praying together.

More if there's time

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, especially verses 20–28 and 54–55, Paul is very clear that Jesus' death and resurrection changed everything. If they hadn't happened, salvation would not be possible. But, as they have happened, they show that no problem is too big for God to overcome. If God could bring Jesus through death to a better life, then he can bring us through any problem we face to a better life.

Notice that Jesus' resurrection did not bring him back to where he was before, but forward into a new spiritual life.

Talk about:

- What does this mean as we face the difficulties of growing older?
- What does this mean as we face death?

Spend some time in prayer, remembering and praying for people who are now going through this very difficult experience (or similar difficult times) or simply pray the following prayer together.



Closing prayer

Lord, you have overcome death and all that comes with it. You have brought us to yourself, and you walk with us through all that life in this fallen world can throw at us, including death. Thank you, Lord. Fill us with your peace, surround us with your love, and give us hope in the joy of being with you forever. Amen.

Explore at home

As Christians we have this wonderful expectation of eternity that is rooted in the promises of our loving heavenly Father.

With this assurance, we can prepare for the end of our earthly lives in ways that show our faith, bless our families, and point others to him.

Use your journal (or start one for the first time) and take some time over the coming months to:

- Reflect on how you will take strength from God's promises going forward.
- Begin to put practical documents, plans and requests into place.
- Take steps to reconcile any broken relationships.
- Consider what spiritual legacy you'd like to leave and how you'll share it.

What a blessing to be able to say at the end of our lives, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* 2 Timothy 4:7

5. Lifelong purpose:
Joining in with God's mission in later life



Entering into the theme

"They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green."
Psalm 92:14

After retirement or in the face of physical limitations, many believers may wonder how they can still contribute to God's kingdom. This theme explores ways in which older Christians can continue to join in with God's mission to make disciples through prayer, mentoring, volunteering, or by loving and encouraging others.

It reassures us that there's no 'retirement' from serving God, no matter one's age or circumstance, and that our experience is always valuable.

Let's open in prayer together
Gracious God, thank you for gathering us today. We are reminded that in every season of life, you enable us to flourish and grow, and you call us to bear fruit for the advancement of your kingdom. Open our hearts as we study your Word – may we be encouraged, inspired, and ready to serve you with wisdom and love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

Risen from the grave, Jesus sent his followers to make disciples, baptising and teaching them to walk in his ways (Matthew 28:19–20). That mission is still unfinished. Together in the church, we play our part – bringing our experiences, skills and gifts to serve God's purposes and glorify his name.



Talk about:

- How we respond to God's disciple-making call on our lives changes through the seasons of our life, and yet the call remains.
- How has your role in God's mission through the church changed over time?

Older people, like the Apostle Paul, often carry strengths that are helpful to the church, which many younger people are still developing.

Talk about:

- Think of a few things that may be more common among older people than among young people. Often these are learned by experience. What do you think are the most important?

Exploring what the Bible says

Last time we looked at some verses from Philippians, chapter 1, let's read the Bible together and return to some of them.

Read Philippians 1:20–26 together.

Paul is in prison when he is dictating these words, fully aware that he might never come out alive. He is happy to die, but he knows that if he remains alive, he has so much more to do. In verses 24–26 he claims three things, first that it is more necessary for the Christians in Philippi that he remain alive, second that their progress and joy in the faith are a deep concern for him and third, he also hopes to give them reasons to boast about how good it is to be a Christian.

Let's tease out in more detail, why it was necessary for the Philippian Christians that Paul remain alive.

Talk about:

- Paul could help the Philippian Christians progress in their faith. How do you think he might have done that?
- We don't often think about helping other Christians find more joy in their faith. How do you think Paul could help the Philippian Christians be more joyful?
- What do you think there was about Paul's life that could lead the Philippian Christians to boast about how good it is to be a Christian?

These claims are true, not only for Paul, but they can be true for all of us.

Expressing what we've been thinking about

Each of us have been uniquely gifted by God to contribute to his kingdom throughout our lives. Those gifts are developed and honed through the circumstances, opportunities and experiences of our lives.

Talk about:

- What might each of us do to nurture faith, champion joy, and encourage Christian confidence in our local churches?
- Explore together what each of these opportunities might mean for you personally.

The Bible refers to a whole host of spiritual gifts including administration, apostolic mission, discernment, evangelism, exhortation, faith, giving, healing, helping, hospitality, knowledge, leadership, mercy, prophecy, serving, speaking in tongues, teaching, wisdom.

Talk about:

- What spiritual gifts, skills and experiences can you offer in this regard, and what action can you take today to make it happen?
- Make a list of words describing what the different members of your group do or could contribute to the mission of the church between you. Create a word cloud or a collage together.

More if there's time

In Luke 2 Simeon and Anna's story gives us a wonderful glimpse of God's purpose for them in later life and should encourage us that he has one for us too.

Read Luke 2:22–38 together.

Anna was a widow, and very old. These factors combined would also have meant that she was poor, and yet none of these led Anna to retreat from God's mission. Instead, she surged forward.

Talk about:

- Can you spot how God advanced his kingdom through Anna, even in later life?

Simeon was ready to breathe his last breath, but God still had something incredible for Simeon to see and to do.

Talk about:

- What was God's purpose for Simeon in later life?
- God blessed and used Simeon and Anna mightily in their last season of life. What does their story reveal about God's purpose for you in this season?



Closing prayer

Loving God, thank you that you have created us to know purpose in your glorious kingdom for the whole of our lives. Help us to keep bearing fruit, sharing the joy of your salvation, and encouraging others. Send us out with renewed purpose to serve you faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Explore at home

Spend some time looking at these beautiful verses about the value of older people in the kingdom of God. How might these shape your personal prayers and approach to ministry in the season ahead?

Acts 2:17–18

Psalm 71:17–18

Isaiah 40:31

Psalm 92:12–14

Have a go at writing a prayer for your group, based on the truths you find in these verses. Are you happy to share it next time you meet?

6. Legacy of life:
Sharing our faith with others



Entering into the theme

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

As we reflect on the lives we've lived, we may wonder how to ensure that our faith endures beyond us. This session encourages us to pass our faith on to others, helping us see legacy not just as material inheritance but as a spiritual one.

It also challenges us to think about how our everyday words and actions communicate our faith to others – whether family, friends, neighbours or strangers. We want to strike a balance: being natural, gracious and respectful while loving and living in a way that makes Jesus known.

Let's open in prayer together

Loving Lord, thank you for those who shared faith with us and showed us your love. As we meet today, help us to learn how to pass on that faith to others – young and old – through what we say and how we live. Fill us with your Spirit so that our lives bring glory to Jesus. Amen.

Experiencing it in my life

People's experiences of coming to repentance and faith in Jesus vary. Particular life events, friends and family, reading the Bible, or simply a profound realisation are some examples of the pivotal moments on many people's faith journey.

Some of us have been disciples for many years and others have more recently decided to follow Jesus.



Talk about:

- Share how long you've been a Christian, including how you came to faith. What was it that made you take the step of faith?
- Looking back, what has been your experience of sharing your faith within your family, church family, workplace or neighbourhood? Have you found it easy or difficult? What have been the outcomes?

Exploring what the Bible says

There is much teaching in the Bible about helping others to know Jesus. Let's read a few together:

Romans 10:14–15: Sharing the message of the gospel with people is of eternal significance.

John 4:1–42: Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman shows us a natural way of sharing:

- he starts a conversation in a very ordinary situation;
- he makes some thought-provoking comments;
- he accepts her questions;
- he says some very clear things about himself.

These might provide four steps to having a spiritual conversation with someone.

Talk about:

- How these four steps might provide a helpful way of developing spiritual conversations with others today.

John 4:28-30 show us that new believers often witness even more simply. The Samaritan woman, with imperfect knowledge but real joy, immediately goes and tells her neighbours what Jesus has done for her. Her simple, honest testimony and invitation to "Come and see" results in an instant response. This can give us confidence as we step out in faith to share the good news about Jesus.

Expressing what we've been thinking about

Sharing the good news of Jesus starts with real friendship, not treating people as projects. We may journey with people for years, and they may still not be ready for the 'big conversation'. That's okay. We have a beautiful opportunity to keep gently sowing seeds – often a simple comment or question can open the door to a faith-filled conversation.

"I'm just so grateful to God for my family/friends/home."

"Would you like me to pray about that?"

"If you could ask God one question, what would you ask?"

"I'm off to church on Sunday. Would you like to come with me?"



Talk about:

- What other examples can you think of?

More if there's time

Consider together how Paul made his faith visible beyond the church community – in prison (Acts 16), in the storm (Acts 27), and on the road to Rome (Acts 28).



Talk about:

- Imagine ways he might have spoken or acted to make his faith clear.

From Paul's witness we can learn to make faith visible by staying faithful under pressure – worshipping, praying, and speaking courage into fear in all the places God leads us to be.

Our role is to share simply what God has done for us, and live it out with integrity and love, in whatever setting we find ourselves – at home, in church, in our community groups, on the bus and in waiting rooms.



Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for people who nurtured us in our faith, who set us good examples and guided us. Help us to take every opportunity to share our faith with others. May our words and actions point people to you, and lead to that glorious celebration in heaven for every sinner who repents. Amen.

Explore at home

Inviting God's power to help us share Jesus with others, young and old, is vital. Write five names in your journal with whom you are called to share Jesus – commit to praying for them and for your interactions with them regularly from here on.

Now imagine, one by one, these people asked you to tell them your story of faith. What would you say? Have a go at writing your response in around 100 words: your life before Christ, how you met the Lord, and what life is like after becoming a Christian. Practise telling your story and always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have.

And finally...

As we come to the end of this series, our discipleship continues. The Lord who has led us this far will keep shaping us for his glory and so that others might come to know him – we can be confident that he who began a good work in us will see it through to completion (Philippians 1:6).

Let us go then into our everyday places with quiet courage, knowing that we are deeply loved by the King of kings, and ready to share that love with those who God puts in our path.

Blessing

May the God who has carried you "to your old age and grey hairs"[1] establish you "fresh and green"[2] and strengthen you to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. And "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him"[3], so that your life overflows with hope to everyone you meet, until you are raised in glory with him. Amen.

[1] Isaiah 46:4; [2] Psalm 92:14; [3] Romans 15:13