

ON A MISSION

Section 3

MISSION IN WORDS AND ACTION



This is the final SECTION in *'on a mission'*. In the two previous sections we have looked at the question of what the good news is and where our friends are at (or not at) in relation to it, as well as addressing the question of how we can work together to sustain involvement in mission. In this 3rd section we will look at the more 'nuts and bolts' issues of talking about our faith, praying, and taking initiatives.

But of course, merely 'looking' at these nuts and bolts issues isn't enough; what we are on about is improving what we do in these areas. To this end, each study will include some exercises to get us trying things out – especially in the area of talking about our faith experiences. Some of these exercises will really work for us; others won't. To find out which is which let's be willing to just give it a go! So, come prepared to take some faith risks as we go through the next few weeks...

Our 3 studies are:

1. **connecting our good news experiences and our words**
2. **taking a faith risk**
3. **explaining what it's all about**

CONNECTING OUR GOOD NEWS EXPERIENCES AND OUR WORDS

One of the big issues we face in mission begins with us: 'how does this good news actually make a difference for me?' And when we have answered that question we then have another: 'how do I explain these differences and talk about this stuff with my friends?' Let's see if together we can help each other make some progress in answering these questions...

Experiencing the good news today

Is it possible that the Goodnews is having more of an impact on our lives than we realise? We think this is highly likely. It is easy to underestimate what God is doing in and through us. This first study is designed to increase our awareness of God's presence and help in our day to day lives.

- Is there an area of your life you believe God is at work? Can you pinpoint some way(s) the Goodnews is making a difference for you right now?

- **What things do you currently do** to help you keep in touch with how God and the good news are impacting you?

Peter's puzzling experience of God

Even the apostle Peter sometimes had difficulty hearing what God was saying to him. In Acts 10-11 we have an account of how Peter first took the good news beyond the Jewish world to that of the Gentiles. To do this didn't come naturally to Peter; God had to really get his attention. Although the story itself involves some rather unusual occurrences, it may give us some light as to how God can communicate with us.

- Read Acts 10:1-11:18
- From what you can tell, note down the ways God tried to communicate with Peter AND how Peter responded to these.

- At what point do you think Peter understood what God was trying to communicate to him?
- What do you think were some of the barriers for Peter that may have hindered his understanding?
- What do you think we can learn from Peter's experience that may help us?

Exercise : experiencing God at work in my life

It should not surprise us that the God who loves us and continues to breathe life into us should also be continuing to communicate with us. But for many of us, it too often feels as though we miss it. The days go by and we don't feel any strong sense of connection at all – either good or bad.

So our challenge is to listen well. To do this we will need a certain amount of discipline. We may also need to listen for God's voice in unexpected places – just like Elijah, who expected to hear God in the powerful wind or earthquake or fire, but instead heard God in the gentle whisper (1Kings 19:11ff).

The exercise below is aimed at taking an experience you have had recently and digging a little deeper to see if we can discover God's voice to you in your everyday world – a voice that can encourage, inspire and challenge us to move beyond where we currently are.

Step 1

You need to think of something memorable that has happened. Start the exercise by describing the experience. The table over the page gives you some categories with which to reflect on your experience (feelings, actions, thoughts, longings). *All* of these categories may not be relevant for your experience, but you should at least consider them because they may help you think outside your normal patterns. As you go, also note down any bible passages or stories that seem to be related and significant to your issue. As best you can, try and write down/draw/articulate in some form what it is you think God is trying to get your attention on.

At first this may all seem a little daunting. It can often take a while to even come up with a memorable experience in the first place, let alone reflecting on where God is in it! But we trust that as you persevere and maintain a prayerful attitude, God will give you some light – just like entering a dark room: at first you are disoriented because everything looks black, but slowly some shapes begin to appear and soon you can find your way around the room.

Step 2

Once you have identified something that God has encouraged or inspired or challenged you with, you are ready for the second part of the exercise: communicating this with the group ***using language that your friends who aren't Christians could understand***. In the group, as you listen to each other, provide feedback on how 'user friendly' you felt their explanation was.

This is a crucial part of the exercise. In a safe environment, we need to learn to practise and exercise these 'spiritual voice' muscles. In this environment it is ok to make mistakes and not get it right. That's what practise and exercise is all about ☺. The point is that God is regularly communicating with us, and it's good for us to pass on what we are learning to our friends. They may well benefit from what we are learning, and they may well be attracted to the God who is communicating with us – the same God who loves *them* passionately and wants to communicate with *them*.

Experiencing God at work in my life

<p>Experiences</p> <p>Matthew 10:29, 30 Romans 8:28</p>	<p>What Happened?</p> <p>At home, at work, out, etc (e.g. events, incidents, activities, conversations).</p> <p>Is there an outstanding event or incident?</p>	
<p>Feelings</p> <p>Romans 9:1 Colossians 3:15</p>	<p>How did it affect me?</p> <p>Reactions, responses, emotions. (e.g. Angry/happy, disappointed/encouraged, anxious/relaxed, guilty/proud)</p> <p>Is there a dominant emotion?</p>	
<p>Actions</p> <p>Philippians 2:12,13</p>	<p>What did I do/say?</p> <p>How was I provoked/tempted to respond? How was I challenged/motivated to act? (e.g. Words, actions, decisions, habits, strategies)</p> <p>Is there a pattern?</p>	
<p>Thoughts</p> <p>1 Corinthians 2:12</p>	<p>What did I think?</p> <p>What questions and issues were raised in my mind. What ideas came to mind? What insights did I have? What mental arguments took place? (e.g. What was I thinking about God? What did I feel about or see myself? What did I say to God?)</p> <p>Is there a theme?</p>	
<p>Longings</p> <p>Romans 8:26,27 Philippians 3:10 2 Corinthians 5:2</p>	<p>What did I want?</p> <p>What longings and desires came to the fore? (e.g. Longings for safety / acceptance, adequacy / significance)</p> <p>Is there a persistent heart-felt longing?</p>	

Wrap Up

- To conclude, note down any things you feel God has challenged you on or encouraged you with and **any things you need to do** as a result.

- **Organise to pray with some friends you could partner with.** Together, pray that God would give you some good ideas for how you can help your friends move on in their faith journey.