



# **Mission Shaped Living**

**St Mark's Gillingham**

**Small Group / Trio material**

**September—November 2020**

**Additional Resource Material**

## Session 1

### Being Sent

#### Personal Reflection

##### An Encouraging Story

Edith was an eighty-two year old Parochial Church Council secretary in a rural Church of England parish. She attended an MSL group where she was asked to think of people around her who weren't yet Christians. She didn't think she knew anyone until people started to talk about her neighbours. She started to pray for the people who lived next door to her and opposite her. One day she saw the young man who lived next door walking with some difficulty past her front gate. She went outside and asked him what the problem was and he explained that he had developed a very painful skin condition. She invited him in for a cup of tea and after she had listened to his story she offered to pray with him. After she had prayed, he said how much better he felt. This was the first informed prayer Edith had ever prayer with someone.

##### **A Focus for Prayer**

##### **Read John 20:19-23**

Take some time to reflect on the material from session1 'Being Sent'.

Connect with how you are feeling about Jesus calling you to share his love and good news with others. Don't try and hide from any feelings of fear or inadequacy—acknowledge them. Hopefully there might

also be some positive feelings around God wanting to use you and you becoming aware that your life is significant to him.

Bring all of these to God in prayer and trust yourself to him.

### **Breathe: A Pattern of Daily Prayer**

Have a look at the Breathe pattern of prayer shown below and think about your own daily pattern of prayer.

*What works for you?*

*How might this pattern help you to grow in your relationship with God and in your mission?*

Using the image of breathing we can create a rhythm of prayer each day that can help us to have deep points of connection with God. This helps us to keep closer to him throughout the day and in every situation.

#### **Take a Deep Breath**

If possible, at the beginning of each day, have a time of prayer and reading God's word.

Pray for God to come close to you and fill you with his Spirit.

Read a passage of Scripture. As you read, ask questions about what God is revealing about himself and what he is saying to you about your life. Then respond and ask for God's help in living out what you have learnt.

Next, pray more widely for the needs of others and the world around us.

Finish by offering yourself to God using the prayer you have written, praying that he would give you an opportunity to show his love to others that day.

If you didn't have time in your group to write a prayer, the following points may help:

- Offer yourself to God to be used and for opportunities to share his love with others
- Ask for God to help and fill you with his Holy Spirit and give you his love for people.
- Ask him to help you to see where he is at work.
- Pray for him to prepare the hearts of those you will meet
- Ask him to give you an opportunity to show his love to someone today.

### **Catch Your Breath**

At different points in the day take time to pray and look around you at the place you are in and the people who are around you, asking God to bring his kingdom into that situation. You might want to set yourself reminders to pray or to do it when you have a lunch break. Ask God to help you see where he is at work.

### **Breathe Out**

At the end of each day take time to reflect on the events of the day.

- Give thanks for all the signs of God's blessing and goodness.
- Repent of things you have got wrong.
- Reflect of where you share God's love and who God is calling you to.
- Trust to him the things you are anxious about.
- Ask God to bless you and minister to you as you sleep.

**How might this pattern of prayer connect with the rhythm of your daily life? Think about when and where you might pray each section.**

### **Vision for Salvation Exercise**

The next exercise is to encourage you to have a real desire for and vision of someone you love coming to faith in Jesus.

- ◆ Think about someone you know who isn't a follower of Jesus (Pick one person to start with).
- ◆ Imagine that it is now one year from today and you have led them to put their trust in Jesus.
- ◆ Pause and engage with what this looks like—perhaps they are now attending your small group or church service with you on Sundays.
- ◆ Imagine how this might have happened.

*How do you feel?*

*What do you think you would have to do to enable that to happen?*

*What do you think might have to change for you to do this?*

## Journal

# Journal

## Session 2

### Confidence

#### Personal Reflection

An encouraging story:

James was walking thorough a park one day, taking time to quietly pray for God's blessing on anyone he walked past. He noticed a man sitting on a bench and a thought came into his mind: 'Tell him that he will see his children again.' James had learned that this kind of thought was often from God but he was still nervous as he said this to the man: "I'm a Christian and I am walking around the park praying to God. When I saw you, I thought that God might be giving me a message to say to you, which is that you will see your children again. Does that make sense?" The man began to cry. It turned out that his relationship with his wife had just ended and that she had taken their children back to Poland. James was able to show how God loved him and cared about his loss, and he prayed for the man and invited him to church.

#### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read John 7:37-39

A life of mission is an overflow of God's love and Spirit within you, or as Jesus describes it, 'Rivers of living water.....[flowing] from within them' (John 7:38) If this is the case then being full of the Holy Spirit is key to a daily life of mission.

*When have you felt most excited by Jesus and his presence in your life?*

*What clues does this give you as to how you can keep your faith alive day by day?*

*Take some time to pray for personal renewal and an openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

### **Asking God Questions Exercise**

If we are going to grow in confidence in discerning God's voice, we have to learn to listen to him. One of the key factors in this is asking God questions and then waiting to see how he answers. You can ask him all kinds of questions, including:

- What he loves about a person or your town or city,
- How to solve a tricky problem at work,
- How he wants you to pray from the place where you work,
- How to be a good parent to your child;
- What he wants you to do next in leading someone to faith.

As soon as you pray and ask him a question, begin to listen. Spiritual listening involves becoming aware of any thought or image that comes to mind, or an emotion we start to feel that we didn't expect. God's answer may come through something someone else says,

Once we think we have heard something, we have to decide if it is from God, and, if it is how he wants us to respond. Here is a helpful checklist of how to test if it is God speaking:

- Is it consistent with Scripture? God would never contradict what he has said in his written word.
- The character of Jesus—does the idea ‘feel’ like Jesus in it’s heart and intent?
- Consequence—what would be the result of acting on the impressions you have? Would it glorify Jesus and produce an outcome that would further God’s kingdom?
- Conviction of the Spirit—did you pray for this and did you feel a sense of God’s peace or presence when you sensed this message?
- Counsel of the saint—what do wise friends have to say?

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## Session 3

### Courage

#### Personal Reflection

##### An Encouraging Story:

Stephen started to pray for five people he knew who didn't yet know Jesus. Two of those people were his brother and sister-in-law. A week after he had started to pray for them, he happened to be in the car with his sister-in-law on a family outing. She turned to him and said, "I realise that I don't know anything about what you do in the church you go to. Could you tell me what happens in church?"

Stephen was amazed because in ten years of her being married to his brother neither of them had ever asked anything about faith or church. Now, a week after he had started to pray for them, she had asked him to talk about this. He realized God was hearing and answering his prayers.

##### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read John 1:35-42

Andrew isn't well known or famous among the twelve apostles but he does two really important things. Firstly, he follows Jesus himself, and then he invites his brother Simon Peter.

*Take some time to remember the key people who God used to bring you to faith. What were the things they did that were significant in you coming to faith?*

Pray that you would be able to be that person for the five people you have chosen to pray for.

## Mission Styles Exercise

The student mission agency Fusion describes how each of us has a different natural 'mission style'. We may be one of the following people:

- **A 'convince me' person.**

A 'convince me' person likes to weigh stuff up before coming to conclusions. They are thought-through, they know why they believe what they believe and if they have questions they do their homework to find out more about Jesus.

- **A 'show me' person.**

A 'show me' person is practical and down-to-earth. They know God's love has to be shown through actions. They know what is required to get the job done and serve and love others alongside sharing what Jesus has done for them.

- **A 'talk with me' person**

A 'talk with me' person loves to connect through conversation. They really enjoy sharing deeply with someone else, especially when they get the chance to bring Jesus into the story.

- **A 'let me experience' person**

A 'let me experience' person just goes ahead and tries stuff. They trust their instincts and have a go at sharing Jesus in new ways and with new people, even if they're not sure how it'll work out.

Which one do you think you are? If you're not sure, you could take Fusion's quick online test at <https://missionstyles.org>. Understanding yourself will help you to see why some of the exercises and practices in MSL will feel easier and others harder. And it will help you to understand how you will naturally be able to be involved in God's mission.

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## Session 4

### Compassion

#### Personal Reflection

##### An Encouraging Story:

Sarah works as an administrator in an office and is a mum to two children. When she attended the Mission Shaped Living course she said she could never do anything that involved praying for others or talking about her faith because she lacked confidence. Her group decided to practice praying for one another each week and to set the challenge that whenever they heard someone express a need they would offer to pray.

One day Sarah's colleague Julie was telling her how depressed she was because of some personal health and family issues. Before she could stop herself, Sarah said, 'Could I pray with you?' Julie said yes and Sarah then prayed a simple prayer affirming that God loved Julie and asking him to help her and heal her. At the end of the prayer Sarah wanted to run away and hide because of her embarrassment but Julie was clearly emotional and thanked Sarah. She then said that for the past three months she had started to pray because she was so desperate about her situation and wondered if God was even there. Now that Sarah had prayed with her, she knew that he was. Sarah and Julie arranged to meet each week for lunch to talk about faith.

Do you believe that God could release his blessing or healing through you to someone else? What we believe about ourselves really matters

as it will determine what we will be willing to do on mission with Jesus!

### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Here are three simple questions about love:

*Do you love God? (Reflect on whether your heart towards God is full of love and gratitude and a desire to serve him.)*

*Do you love the people around you? (How is this shown in your daily life?)*

*Do you love helping people connect with God? (What shaped your answer to this question?).*

### **Making Plans Exercise**

This week plan to do one of the three missional practices you looked at in the group session on 'Compassion'. Think about who and how you might seek to bless, serve or pray for someone, especially one of the five people you have been praying for because God will already be at work in them. Make a plan about what you will do and perhaps share it by text with other members of the group so they can pray for you.

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## Session 5

### Connecting

#### Personal Reflection

An encouraging story:

Norman and Richard were neighbours who had exchanged 'good mornings' every day for about seven years as Richard headed off to work. One day it suddenly dawned on Richard that he didn't even know his neighbour's name, so he stopped and asked him. For the next few weeks they started saying, 'Morning, Norman,' and 'Morning, Richard,' and Richard said it felt good to know his name! Norman said it felt good to know his name! Richard was sitting in the local coffee shop one morning when he saw Norman going by, so he knocked on the window and invited him for coffee; it was easy because he now knew his name! They had a chat for a good hour; Norman told Richard all about his life, how his wife had passed away, and of his love of steam trains. Richard reflected how it was good to get to know him after all this time.

The weeks went by and it was coming up to Christmas. Richard was shopping with his daughter and spotted a DVD and book collection of the greatest British steam railways. 'Norman would like that' he thought so he bought it and wrapped it up. A few days before Christmas, they exchanged good mornings and Richard gave Norman his present. Norman was slightly taken aback and wanted to know why he had bought him a present. Richard explained that he was a Christian and that Christmas meant a lot to him,

that giving gifts was a symbol of the gift that we get in the birth of Jesus, and that he hoped Norman would enjoy his gift. Richard didn't see Norman for a couple of weeks, but when he bumped into him in the village, he asked him if he had time for coffee. Norman said he didn't because he was off to a Bible study. 'I hadn't realized you went to church,' Richard said. 'I didn't,' Norma replied. 'Not until you gave me your gift. I've been going since Christmas as someone invited me.'

It's funny what can happen when you ask someone their name!

### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read John 9:1-12

In this passage the blind man simply tells his experience of the healing Jesus brought to his life, and when he was asked a question he didn't know he simply said 'I don't know'.

As you remember your story of coming to faith, try to imagine what life would be like if Jesus hadn't led you to follow him. Think about what it might be like to live without knowing his love. Think about answers to prayer that you have had and the purpose Jesus has given you. Remember the difference that the hope of eternal life gives you.

Give thanks for this and pray for those who you love who don't know this same hope.

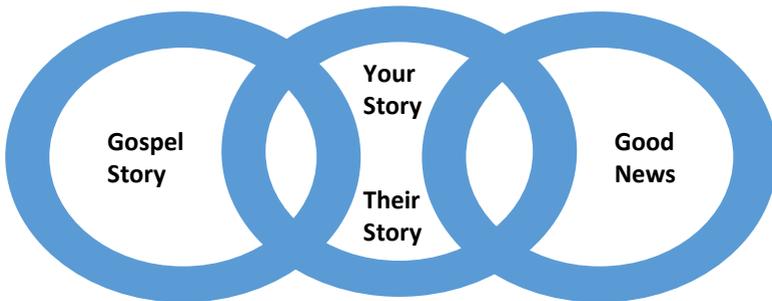
### **Understanding how your story connects**

The power of your story is how it helps people to understand that the gospel story is good news for them. That happens when you are able to describe how the gospel story became good news for you in a way that connects with their lives, perhaps by you telling the story of

how you came to faith or by telling a smaller story. For example, if your friend talks about parenting troubles you could talk about the difference being able to pray for your children has made to your life and then offer to pray for them

Or if your friend talks about mental health problems, you can share your own struggles with this and how knowing God's love makes such a difference.

Take some time to think about your five people and how your life and their lives connect, and some smaller stories that might be interesting for them to hear. Pray for an opportunity to share these with them.



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## Session 6

### Continuing

#### Personal Reflection

An encouraging story:

Emma is a mum of young boys and a part-time GP. She felt challenged on her Mission Shaped Living course to invite friends to the next Alpha Course. She listed eight people and made plans to invite them. They all said 'no'. But what she realized were some important things that often hold us back from inviting people:

- They were happy and relaxed to be invited
- they assumed that it was a good thing they were being invited to
- They felt bad about not accepting the invitation (instead of her worrying that they would be offended by the invitation, it was they who were worried that they were offending her).
- Some would have come if they had been able and said 'please ask me again'.
- It didn't negatively affect any of her friendships.

Emma said that fear had held her back before, but nothing she was afraid of actually happened. She described how her faith grew as she prayed before each invitation and she felt joyful in obeying God and being known by her friends as a Christian.

## A Focus for Prayer

Read Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew starts to follow Jesus and then invites his friends to a meal so that they can meet him too. We can only imagine how nervous Matthew felt about how it would go. Ask God to give you an idea of what you could invite one of your friends to in order to help them meet Jesus. A special service at church? An Alpha Course (or equivalent) A meal at your house with friends from church? Use the next exercise to work out who to invite and what to do next.

## Spiritual Assessment Exercise

Write the names of your five people in the space below.

Using arrows, indicate any sense of movement of signs that God is at work in them.

An upward arrow means they are showing signs of opening up to God.



A downward arrow reflects that they have reacted negatively to something spiritual that you did or they have stepped back from spiritual engagement



A horizontal arrow means no change



The key, particularly for people who have responded positively is to ask God 'what next?' i.e. what could you do next to help that person come closer to God.

What insights does this give you about your friends and what to do next in helping them to come to faith? Using the analogy of a traffic light, is it:



Green for go—you can see a next step and sense God calling you to take it;



Orange for wait and get ready—keep praying with some fresh understanding of what to pray for;



Red for stop—they are rejecting any engagement with the Christian faith and you can pray about barriers being broken down.

Spend some time praying for you friends in light of this.

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## Session 7

### Conversion

#### Personal Reflection

An encouraging story:

Ruth is a student who was meeting another student for coffee after they attended an evangelistic event the night before. Her friend was clearly interested by what she had heard and as she asked questions Ruth suggested that she explain the Christian faith using the Three Circles diagram. She told her testimony as part of it. At the end of it, she asked her friend if she would like to put her faith in Jesus and she did! Ruth said, 'It was because I had learned The Three Circles tool that I felt confident to have that conversation. I never thought I would be someone who Jesus could use to lead someone to salvation—I'm Amazed!'

#### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read John 3:1-18

Here Nicodemus meets up with Jesus one-to-one, and Jesus answers his questions and challenges him to be born again.

*Reflecting on this passage and Ruth's story, do you think that you could lead someone to put their faith in Jesus?*

*What affects how your answer that question?*

### **Stories of Hope Exercise**

Why not take one of the other gospel passages from the Seven Stories of Hope? Try and remember the questions and practice engaging with the passage using them. Imagine leading one of your friends through it.

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## Session 8

### Mission Shaped Living

#### Personal Reflection

##### An encouraging story

Patrick had invited a friend from work, Scott, to the Alpha Course. Scott had a great time on Alpha and opened up spiritually, but he didn't come to faith. Patrick was disappointed and didn't know what to do next. He realized that he had been trained in how to read a 'Stories of Hope' gospel story with someone and felt prompted to ask Scott if he'd like to meet up once a month and read something from the bible and discuss it (he was convinced that Scott would say no). Amazingly, Scott said yes and they started to do this, and Patrick discovered the way he could continue to walk with Scott towards faith in Jesus.

##### **A Focus for Prayer**

Read Acts 8:26-40

After the formation of the church in Acts 2, God used so many different people and ways to spread the gospel. The key was each person being obedient to what God asked them to do next. Here in Acts 8, Philip obeys the angel's instructions to go south on the desert road, literally to the middle of nowhere. It makes no sense, but Philip obeys and the result is that the Ethiopian is converted and the gospel reaches Africa.

## **‘What Next?’ Exercise**

For you to continue to live missionally, you simply have to regularly ask God, ‘Lord, what next?’ and listen for a prompt, a thought process, an idea—and then obey it.

You can ask ‘what next?’ For yourself. With the understanding of where you are in the process of making disciples, why not ask God to show you how you can take the next step to become confident in God using you in one of the missional practices you haven’t tried yet.

Or you can ask ‘what next?’ for one of the people you are praying for—what is the next thing you can do to help them come closer to knowing Jesus?

Try it now. Choose your focus—your own discipleship or one of the people you are praying for. Pray an opening prayer to come before God, and centre yourself on him.

Ask, ‘Lord, what next?’ And capture whatever you sense God prompting you to think about. It won’t necessarily be fully formed, but whatever it is, begin to think and pray about how to obey it.

Then choose to have courage and obey it.

Once you have done this, review it, talk about it with your small group or Trio, notice what God is doing and what you’re learning. Then ask, ‘Lord, what next?’ again.

The process of discipleship is simply taking the next step. God rarely gives us a long-term plan, but he is always ready to lead someone who is asking him what he is calling them to do next.

You are now set for life!

**And don’t forget—join us at church on 5th December from 10am for some Treasure Hunting—what Treasure is God going to reveal or present to you?**

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