

# And Now...?

Small Group Booklet

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# AND NOW .....?

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Dear Friends,

The seven next words of Christ are spoken after the resurrection as He meets His followers in a variety of situations. Jesus comes to each one of these people and shows not only the miracle of His resurrection but also His great love for them. The risen Lord, whom they all know and (eventually) recognize, loves them just as much now as He did when He walked alongside them day by day. But this is a new relationship for He has changed and as a result they change too. Knowing that He is man – for He eats with them and they can touch Him - they also realize that He is God, perhaps fully understanding this for the first time. And yet He is still Jesus, the One they love and who loves them.

These next seven words are recorded in the Gospels and the early chapters of Acts. They reveal Christ's care, concern and plan for His followers.

We pray that these words will alert those who explore them to the need for true relationship with God in Jesus Christ and to the peace which results from such a relationship.

May God bless you as you journey with Him to Pentecost

Mandy

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## WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

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John 20:1-18

**J**esus' last words must have resonated in the hearts and minds of His followers who still remained at the foot of His cross. 'It is finished.'

But how could they have known that this was actually just the beginning?

*It was very early when we walked to the tomb that morning. Three of us. Sad to the point of heartbreak. We planned to dress the Master's body with herbs and spices, befitting One we loved so much. But the scene that greeted us was not what we had imagined. The stone was rolled away; the tomb was open – and empty. As one we turned and ran. Peter and John needed to be told. I returned with the men, struggling to keep up.*

*John had gone ahead and I saw him hesitate at the entrance to the tomb; Peter, always impetuous, rushed straight in and John followed him.*

*The men looked and left, but I stayed. I could not leave. I needed to see inside for myself and so, hesitantly, I went to the entrance of the tomb and peered inside.*

*Two men were there. Not the guards we had originally expected but men in shining white, tall, with gentle voices that rang through my very soul. 'Why are you crying?' they asked.*

*'They have taken my Lord,' I whispered.*

*And the question was repeated, this time from someone behind me. I whirled round and a third man stood there. He was vaguely familiar but I could not place him. 'Who are you looking for?' he said. Somehow I had the confidence to step forward and say 'Sir, if you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will go and get Him.'*

*He looked at me and said one word. 'Mary'. And I knew.*

*I knew that this was Jesus from the way He spoke my name.*



Sometimes we do not know what we are looking for and do not recognize it when we see it; or we run from God, not wanting to hear Him call our name. Sometimes we hear and ignore Him, rejecting the voice of the One who loves us because of the changes in our life we may have to make if we respond. Sometimes we do not know why we are crying and do not recognize the pool of tears that grows beside us. Why did Jesus ask Mary again why she was crying? Did He want her to look deep inside herself to see where the source of her tears lay? Jesus would get to the heart of a problem with His comments or His questions – and piercing the heart was the beginning of healing.

Today, after Easter, as we live our lives with the resurrected Jesus, we need to listen to Him calling our name; hear His question to us. 'Why are you crying?' and respond. Why are you crying? What is the deepest hurt in your life? Who are you looking for? Do you hear Him calling your name? Can today be the time when you say 'yes' to Him and give Him your tears and your pain and respond to Him more fully than you have ever done before?

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## FAMILY TIME

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Have you ever been lost? Or have you lost something you treasured? What was it like to find it again?

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday : Luke 15:3-7**

*How do you feel when you think of Jesus searching for you?*

Jesus, You came to seek and save the lost. Your love is inclusive, accepting and warmly embracing. I rejoice in my salvation and the healing it brings.

### **Monday: Romans 1:1-6**

*Paul was completely certain that God had called him. How sure are you that God has called you?*

Reflection v.6 *'...and I am also among those who are being called to belong to Jesus.'*

Here I am, Lord Jesus, send me.

### **Tuesday: John 20:1-18**

*How do you react when you realise that God is calling your name?*

Holy Spirit, quicken my spirit to discern and recognize the voice of the Lord calling my name and help me to respond accordingly.

### **Wednesday: 1 Samuel 3:6**

*It took Samuel three times to realise that it was God who was calling him. How do you recognize the voice of God?*

Lord, help me to cultivate a closer more intimate walk with You in my daily life in order that I may begin to recognize the sound of Your voice calling me.

### **Thursday: Matthew 9:13**

*Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. How does that thought make you feel – for yourself – and for others?*

Thank You, Jesus, for initiating my relationship with You through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is Your kindness that leads me and others to repentance.

### **Friday: Acts 2:39**

*You are one of a multitude whom God has called. Celebrate the community of God as you spend time in worship today.*

I celebrate today with my brothers and sisters in Christ and praise and thank You, Lord, for forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit operating in our lives.

### **Saturday: Jeremiah 1:4-8**

*What is God calling you to do for Him? Prayerfully reflect on this passage.*

Lord, as I wait upon You today, thank You for the confirmation of the call placed upon my life. May I be faithful to this call.

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## SESSION I

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### WELCOME

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Have you ever seen someone famous in an everyday situation? Did you instantly recognize them? How did they compare with their TV screen persona?

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### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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### ACCOUNTABILITY

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Did you manage to help anyone who has been waiting and/or asking for your help in the past week?

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### WORD

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*Read: John 20:1-18*

1. Think back over your day. In what ways do you see the risen Jesus in your daily walk?
  2. What circumstances prevent you from seeing or recognizing Him?
  3. What spiritual discipline or habit could you use to increase your awareness of Jesus in your day to day life (eg: fasting, journaling; silence; prayer etc)?
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### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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How can you encourage one another in this? Make a list of a variety of ways you can see Jesus in your lives and ask a group member to type it up and email it to everyone. Pray for each other.

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### REACHING OUT

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Look for Jesus in the people you meet in the coming week. Reach out to someone and ask them to join you for a cup of coffee. Will they be able to see Jesus in you as you spend time together?

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## GREETINGS ... DON'T BE AFRAID

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Matthew 28:8-10

**T**he disciples faced an unknown future – alone. It can't have been very reassuring when they looked at one another and saw their own fear reflected in the faces of their friends. Jesus, in His lifetime had told them not to be afraid. But now that He had been crucified – how could they not be afraid?

*The light would not switch off. The double switch – one each end of the passage so you could turn it on or off whichever way you were going – had stopped working. She tried it desperately from both ends. The desperation came, partly from the fact that it would shine in her eyes during the night and keep her awake unless she managed to turn it off; partly because her loneliness and grief, now that her husband was no longer there to fix it threatened to overwhelm her. Such a simple task to fix a light switch – if you know what you are doing. But she didn't. And so she was angry with God. 'You said You'd be my husband! Are You going to come and fix this light? This is a very good time to prove that You will be there for me in my future.' She was shocked at her own anger and audacity. How could she say such a thing to God? She ran to the other end of the passage and turned the switch on-off-on-off. And then, in the deep centre of her heart she heard these words:*

*'Do it slowly'.*

*She stopped her frantic switching. Had she heard correctly?*

*Slowly, gently she switched the light again.*

*And it went off.*

*God had told her, when her husband died, not to be afraid.*

*He would be there for her in the future. But she had wondered ...*

*Now she knew; and the words echoed in her mind as she fell asleep with a deep sense of peace and security.*

*'Don't be afraid ...'<sup>1</sup>*

Sometimes we are in such a rush that we cannot hear the voice of God. We are desperate to succeed; to do things our way; and we struggle with the circumstances, increasingly frustrated, exhausted and, yes, sometimes afraid. We do not stop to see if there is another, better way. We do not always consult with God. Perhaps the matter is too small to worry Him with it; or so big that we cannot see God around the other side of it. We imagine the disastrous consequences of our failure to get it right – and we can become afraid. The challenge seems too great for us. But when we feel we are on the verge of defeat – just as the women who arrived at that empty tomb on that morning felt – we hear the whispered voice, deep inside our hearts: 'Don't be afraid ...'

Would it not be easier if we stopped to listen for the words of God earlier in the process? Why does it take us such a long time to learn to do that? For He is always there – waiting for us to stop and catch our breath and then we hear Him: 'Don't be afraid ...'

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<sup>1</sup> MH

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## FAMILY TIME

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What were you afraid of and what helped you not to be afraid anymore? Pray about some of the things that still scare you.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday : Matthew 28:8-10**

*What deep concern do you have where you would like to hear Jesus say 'Do not be afraid' to you? Tell Him about it.*

I confess my fears before You, Lord, and I pray for a release from the spirit of fear. I confess that I am not bound by fear but have been given a spirit of love, joy and peace of mind instead.

### **Monday: Exodus 3:1-6**

*Moses, that great man of God, was afraid when he became aware that he was in God's presence. How do you feel in God's presence?*

Lord, remove any ungodly fear that I have in Your Presence and replace it with a reverence and holy fear which seeks to love, honour and obey You at all times.

### **Tuesday: Deuteronomy 1:26-33**

*Where in your life, have you realised that God went ahead of you preparing the way so that you had no need to feel afraid?*

'God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways I cannot see ... He has made a way for me'. Thank You, Lord!

### **Wednesday: Joshua 1:9**

*Spend time in God's presence today asking for assurance that He is with you both now and in your future. Give any fear you have to Him.*

Father God, I stand upon Your word today. I choose to align myself to the call to be strong and courageous. You are my strength, my shield and high tower ...

### **Thursday: Psalm 27:1; 27:13-14**

*Read these three verses as a prayer, silently, aloud, in your home language, in different versions, and worship God as you do so.*

I worship You alone, Lord. You are my light and my salvation. I need not be afraid.

### **Friday: Mark 9:30-32**

*What are you afraid to ask Jesus about? Sit quietly and feel His peace – and speak to Him. He is waiting for you.*

Jesus, Your love, grace, mercy and full acceptance of my weaknesses and fears enable me to come before You and find a place of peace and security once more.

### **Saturday: I Peter 3:13-17**

*Look back at Joshua 1:9. In the light of that verse, how do you feel about what Peter says to his readers in his first letter to them?*

Father God, Your Word strengthens and fortifies me as I seek to stand firm and strong in the midst of suffering and persecution.

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## SESSION 2

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### WELCOME

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What was your biggest fear when you were a child?

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### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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### ACCOUNTABILITY

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How did you see Jesus in the people you met during the past week?

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### WORD

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*Read Matthew 28:8-10*

1. Share with the group an occasion when you were afraid but excited at the same time. What happened?
  2. Has the awareness that Jesus has told you not to be afraid and that He is with you affected the way you respond to such situations? Discuss
  3. Last week you shared which spiritual discipline would help you to be more aware of Jesus' presence. How is it helping you to increase your awareness of Him? If you are not putting it into action, what is preventing you from doing so?
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### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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How can the group help you to put your spiritual discipline into action? Pray for one another.

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### REACHING OUT

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This week provide a word of comfort for someone in need – in a queue, in the office, in the school car park – wherever you become aware of them.

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## WHAT ARE YOU SO CONCERNED ABOUT?

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Luke 24:13-34

**E**ven when there are two of us talking together, stimulating one another's thoughts, we do not realise that there is a Third who longs to be part of the conversation. How would that conversation change if we invited Him to have His say?

*The walk was so long that day. It seemed to take forever. All we wanted to do was get home. We went over and over all that had just happened in Jerusalem. We could think of nothing else.*

*What about all the promises Jesus had made? What was going to happen to us? I have to admit that I was worried as people knew that we had been with Him and we were at risk. We could hear someone striding out behind us. He was whistling and gaining on us fast. We kept our eyes down, not wanting to make contact with him – hoping he would just go past. But no. He slowed and greeted us in a voice full of life and good spirits:*

*'What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?'*

*We stopped amazed. 'Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?'*

*Where had this guy been? Everyone was talking about the empty tomb, and the stranger who had asked the women why they were looking for the living in a cemetery. Even Peter had gone to investigate and had confirmed their story. None of us could make head or tail of what was happening. Quickly we filled him in – and then he began to talk. He told us everything the Scriptures said about the Messiah.*

*But we did not get it. How thick-headed could we be? As we reached Emmaus it looked as if he was going straight on. But we were fascinated by this man and encouraged him to stay with us. As we sat down to eat, he took a loaf of bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to us. Then the pieces fell into place and we knew, deep inside just who this Man was. We looked at each other in amazement – and when we looked back – He had gone! Vanished!*

*Without a moment's hesitation we were on our feet, running back to Jerusalem. We had to tell the others this incredible news – we had seen the risen Lord – even though we had not recognized Him, He had walked with us along the road!*

*'Peter – Peter – we have great news ... !'*

Jesus promised that He would never leave us (Matthew 28:20). But we forget, just as we don't always listen for His voice. Do we think that He is there for others but not always for us? Or is it that He is there sometimes but not always? What depth of expectation do we have that He is with us at all times? Jesus made promises to His disciples (John 14:16; Matthew 16:18 etc) and He makes the same promises to us. There is no need to be concerned for we will never have to cope alone.

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## FAMILY TIME

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Share with one another something that you find hard to understand about God. Pray together for God to help you understand.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday: Luke 24:13-34**

*What is concerning you at the moment?*

Lord Jesus, I cast all my burdens onto You because I know that You care for me. Thank You for restoration of peace – Your shalom in the midst of my circumstances.

### **Monday: Philippians 4:4-7**

*Looking back to your answer to yesterday's question, pray verse six and ask God to help you to put it into practice today regarding that concern.*

I praise and thank You, Lord, for peace as I give my concerns into Your strong and capable hands.

### **Tuesday: Psalm 37:1-7**

*What makes you so angry that it affects your walk with Christ?*

Lord, forgive me for nurturing anger in my heart. I confess and release it. Help me use it in a positive way and ask for healing.

### **Wednesday: Jonah 4:5-11**

*Jonah was upset about the vine, but God reprimanded him. What is there in your life about which you may be unnecessarily upset? What is God saying to you in this regard?*

Lord, forgive me for entertaining selfish and self-defeating negative emotions. Give me a heart of compassion for those who are walking in darkness.

### **Thursday: Philippians 2:1-5**

*Who are you concerned about at the moment?*

Lord Jesus, Your comfort and concern about my own personal welfare causes me to reflect on the need to reach out unselfishly and lovingly toward others.

### **Friday: I Corinthians 4:1-5**

*How much impact does the opinion of others have on you?*

Lord, release me from a people-pleasing spirit. Help me to examine the motivation of my own heart without the judgment and criticism of others. Thank You for Your loving acceptance.

### **Saturday: Matthew 6:25-34**

*Jesus tells us not to worry about certain things. What place do they have in your life?*

Thank You, Jesus. My every need has been met. You are Jehovah Jireh, my Provider. I rest in You today.

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## SESSION 3

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### WELCOME

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What do you do when you are worried (e.g. bite your nails, eat chocolate, etc.)?

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### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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### ACCOUNTABILITY

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How did you comfort someone in need this last week?

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### WORD

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*Read: Luke 24:13-34*

1. What world situation are you most worried about at the moment? What concerns do you have as to the effect it will have on you?
  2. How do you see God working in this situation?
  3. After your discussion in response to question 2, read John 14:15-18; Romans 8:28 and Hebrews 6:17-20. What difference, if any, does this make to your answer to the previous questions? Why?
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### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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Pray for one another and watch the situations mentioned in your discussion during the week so that you may become aware of God working in each of them.

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### REACHING OUT

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How can you reassure someone who expresses concern to you about a world situation this week? Be alert for people who are worried, and offer them encouragement.



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# PEACE BE WITH YOU

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Luke 24:35-43; John 20:19-29

**W**e are not always aware of the peace that Jesus promises us. Life gets in the way. The demands of the world are too strong and we do not give ourselves time to connect with God or even with other people. So we struggle on, feeling increasingly uneasy, but not aware of the reasons why that is so.

*We walked down through the gorge in the dust and the heat. High cliffs either side of us made the path cool in the middle of the day. Eventually though we came to the end of the chasm and entered a wide open plaza with a magnificent façade carved and built in the cliff face opposite us. People milled around, camels lay in the dust waiting for eager tourists to ride them; cameras were everywhere and there was a steady buzz of conversation. I felt a bit disconnected. The ruins were amazing, the whole system a feat of ancient engineering; the rock was a kaleidoscope of rainbow colours; the sunlight after the cool shadowy gorge lit up the scene; our group was exclaiming over the wonder of the place. But somehow I felt alone.*

*We walked on down the wide valley, admiring the amphitheatre and the tombs carved high above the valley floor, with steps giving access also painstakingly carved from the rock. We came to a small tree. How could that survive in this desert where we had seen nothing green before? A man was sitting beneath it with his camel and – a cat! A cat? What was that doing here? As I looked at this small scene I whispered in my heart ‘Where are You, Lord?’*

*Living as a Christ-follower two thousand years after the resurrection event I am accustomed to being aware of the presence of God with me. But here I could not feel Him. Even as I asked my question I looked up the hill behind the tree to a ruined building standing on the crest. I felt drawn towards it. I climbed the slope, gentle in comparison to the cliffs surrounding us, and found the ruins of a Byzantine chapel, being carefully restored by some archeology students.*

*As I looked around, examining mosaics and carvings, a group of people came in. One was carrying a small suitcase. Opening it he took out priestly vestments and put them on. Reverently he took out a snow white cloth, a plate and a chalice, wafers and wine. He laid the table for the ancient feast of Communion – although he would have called it Mass – and called his congregation together. Then, in Russian or some similar language, he began to celebrate this holy meal with his friends. Although I could not understand a word that was said, I recognized the rhythm of the words and could almost follow the service. And there, I met again my risen Lord.*

*‘I have been with you all along, My child, but you did not know Me. Here I am, just as I promised.’ And I immediately knew peace, and life became real for me again. All sense of disconnection vanished – for here I was suddenly at home with my Lord, even in this strange, amazing place.*

When we are in places that are not holy, or are unfamiliar, or very busy, we may not recognize the presence of Christ with us. Life demands our attention and yet we are strangely ill at ease but do not know why. How can we remember that Christ is always with us? Paul writes, ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord’. That love is manifest in His presence with us and so we know His peace.

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## FAMILY TIME

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Has God ever surprised you in any way? What did you learn about Him on that day? Ask God to show Himself to you in new ways.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday : Luke 24:36-43; Isaiah 26:3**

*'Peace be with you'. Sit quietly for a while and let the peace of God soak into you – body, mind, spirit and soul.*

I praise You with joy and wonder as I reflect on Your glory and grace ... Jesus, You are my Peace.

### **Monday: John 14:27**

*Jesus specifically told His disciples – and us – that He was giving His followers His peace. What does this peace mean to you?*

Lord, You fill my heart with the truth of this Word. I receive the gift of peace – peace of mind and peace of heart today.

### **Tuesday: Romans 5:1-5**

*What peace do you have in an area of your life now that caused you concern in the past?*

You brought me to a deeper spiritual and emotional experience of what it means to be at peace in all circumstances. I praise and thank You.

### **Wednesday: Matthew 5:9**

*How does being called a son or daughter of God change the way you see the role of peacemaker? What does the term peacemaker mean to you?*

*Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness (James 3:18). Praise You, Lord.*

### **Thursday: Matthew 5:23-24**

*With whom do you need to make peace and be reconciled today? How can you make the first move?*

Help me, Lord, to turn from evil and do good in seeking to make peace with others. May my pursuit of peace bring reconciliation to any broken and fractured relationships.

### **Friday: James 3:17-18**

*Where are you sowing in peace and being a peacemaker? How much more peace can you sow for God?*

Give me the wisdom and strength to reach out and seek reconciliation in places of discord.

### **Saturday: 2 Thessalonians 3:16**

*Pray this verse for someone you know who is struggling with anything that deprives them from peace in their life; and for yourself if this describes you.*

Lord, I speak Your shalom over the lives of those who are struggling to find peace of mind, peace of heart and peace in their circumstances.

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## SESSION 4

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### WELCOME

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When have you been most aware that you do not belong and that the place you are in feels very alien?

### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

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What words of comfort and reassurance were you able to offer this week to someone? How did they respond?

### WORD

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*Read: Luke 24:35-43; John 20:19-29*

1. Thomas was not sure about Jesus being alive. What makes you doubt and what impact does such doubt have on your life?
2. Who, in your circle of family or friends, speaks peace into your life? How do they do that? Does it make a difference to you?
3. What are the qualities of a peacemaker? How many of those qualities do you see displayed amongst the members of your group?
4. What quality do you feel you need to grow to become an effective peacemaker

### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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Where do you need peace? Pray for one another in this regard.

### REACHING OUT

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How can you be a peacemaker in your circle? Is there anyone to whom you can offer or show peace this week?



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# GO INTO THE WORLD

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*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-59*

**W**e often think of 'the world' as some exotic or remote place in another country far away. But Jesus told His disciples to take what they had learned to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). So for Him, home was as much part of the mission field as a faraway land was.

*She had met Jesus on a stairwell a short while before and given her life to Him. In a burst of enthusiastic evangelical zeal she had volunteered to join a party of young people running a beach mission on the east coast. It had gone well. As the youngest and most inexperienced Christ-follower in the group she had not expected to be asked to do anything that demanded too much of her. She had come along for the fun, and the sea, and because she felt that maybe, just maybe, Jesus wanted her there.*

*On the penultimate day a member of the leadership team asked her if she would like to give her testimony to the parents that evening – the last night of the mission.*

*She knew she could do it. She had spoken in public before and it had not bothered her. In fact she enjoyed it. So, with heart thumping a bit faster than usual she agreed.*

*For an hour or more that afternoon she sat on the wide window seat with a view over the bay, working out what she would say. She would simply tell her story. That was, after all, what a testimony was, wasn't it? She spent some of the time in prayer, offering her words to God, and asking Him to touch people's lives. She could not imagine how He would do that, using only her every-day story, but she had been around believers long enough to know that it could happen.*

*The time came for her to move to the front of the room where about sixty or so parents had gathered. She was introduced and the room was silent. As she opened her mouth to tell her prepared story, other words emerged. Yes, this was part of her story but it was not a part that she had planned to tell. It was as if the whole world grew still. The people listened with rapt attention as the unplanned words poured out of her. She knew, deep inside, that it was Jesus speaking to these people. And she knew a deep peace as He used her story to touch their hearts. Even her story in the hands of God could make a difference. To this day, she does not know exactly what she said; God just took over. And to this day she is unaware of whether any lives were permanently changed. But she does know that God's word does not go out without bearing seed – and the story she told was His story woven through her own.*

*It gave her the courage to do it again – and sometimes God takes over and sometimes He does not. But she will always be glad that she had the courage to do as He had said 'Go into the world ...'*

Often we resist speaking about God. How many people have not heard because we have not told them? How many people have heard because we took our courage in both hands and spoke out for Jesus? Sometimes, it seems, it is easy to be open about our relationship with God – maybe someone has asked a direct question. But at other times it takes courage – and when we do follow God's command to 'Go into the world ...' miracles can and do happen. Where are you resisting this command today?

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## FAMILY TIME

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Draw a picture or make a collage telling the story of how God has helped you in your life and share it with your family.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday : Mark 16:15-16**

*Jesus is saying this to you today. Where is 'the world' to which you can take the Good News? Holy Spirit, open my eyes to discern the field of harvest in which I am called to sow the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

### **Monday: Matthew 10:5-10**

*Who is God telling you to go to? Pray for this to be revealed to you if you do not already know. Holy Spirit, empower, equip and enable me to fulfill the mandate to preach the Good News and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those I come across in my daily life.*

### **Tuesday: Mark 5:18-20**

*What story do you have to tell about what God is doing in your life that you can share at home which will amaze them?*

Thank You, Lord, for the testimony that I have been given to share with my loved ones. Make me bold and courageous in doing so.

### **Wednesday: Psalm 26:1-8**

*Where and to whom can you proclaim aloud praise for God and tell of His wonderful deeds today?*

Lord, You say that if I open my mouth You will fill it with a testimony of Your goodness, Your grace and Your love ... I will take a stand and publicly praise You at all times.

### **Thursday: John 17:13-19**

*Jesus told the Father that He has sent us into the world just as He Himself was sent. What does this mean to you?*

Lord, we have been called to minister in a world that is often hostile; with differing values. You have called, prepared, protected and consecrated us for service. Thank You!

### **Friday: Acts 15:24-27**

*Judas and Silas were sent with a specific mission. What is your specific mission? Ask God to clarify this for you if you do not already know.*

Holy Spirit, confirm the mission the Lord has prepared for me. Help me to identify and wisely choose how best to operate in the anointing using my specific gifts and talents.

### **Saturday: Matthew 26:6-13**

*How can you play a greater part in telling the Gospel throughout the world?*

Lord, I choose to actively engage, acknowledge and testify of who You truly are in the community in which I live, with boldness, passion and commitment.

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## SESSION 5

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### WELCOME

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Whose stories have captured you – either as a child or an adult? Why do they do so?

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### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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### ACCOUNTABILITY

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Where were you able to be a peacemaker last week?

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### WORD

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*Read: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-59*

1. How do you 'go' and tell your faith story and the Good News in your world today?
  2. What encourages you to witness or prevents you from doing so?
  3. How does your personal spiritual journey affect your willingness or reluctance to tell others about Jesus?
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### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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Pray for one another for boldness to 'go' as Jesus commanded.

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### REACHING OUT

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*'Go and make disciples...'*



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# HAVE YOU CAUGHT ANY FISH?

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*John 21:1-23*

**T**he conversation on the beach must have been a reunion of old friends. Sitting together round the campfire, reminiscing about some of their times together, laughing at some of the strange things that had happened – ‘Do you remember...?’ ‘What was the name of that man who ...?’ Like any gathering of good friends there would have been teasing and laughter and maybe even a few tears.

## **FORGIVENESS**

*Deny Me. Deny Me. Deny Me.  
The words go round and round in my mind.  
I can't bear it!  
Deny Me. Deny Me!  
I told Him no! He was wrong! I'd follow Him to death.  
But I ran with the others and hid in the trees.  
Deny Me. Deny Me.  
Not me, Lord, not Peter.*

*But I did.*

*And He turned in His sorrow to look at me, in my shame.  
I denied Him!  
How can I go on with that memory burning my mind?  
The horror, the pain of denial is real.  
And the look in His eyes was one of such  
Love.  
I must have been wrong. I can't have seen Love.  
Yet this is the Man I have followed for years. I know Him so well.  
Could it be true, in spite of my lies,  
All the hurt and the pain of my words? Could there still be Love?*

*Then He died.*

*And the anguish I felt was beyond all description.  
Deny Me. Deny Me. Deny Me.  
God forgive me!*

*Today the miracle happened.  
The man on the beach called out to us  
‘Throw out your nets on the other side.’  
And we did  
And the catch was so heavy  
it was all we could do to pull them to shore.*

*I knew then He was Jesus*

*And we ate together – a group of friends*

*Then I walked on the beach with Him! Alive and Victorious!*

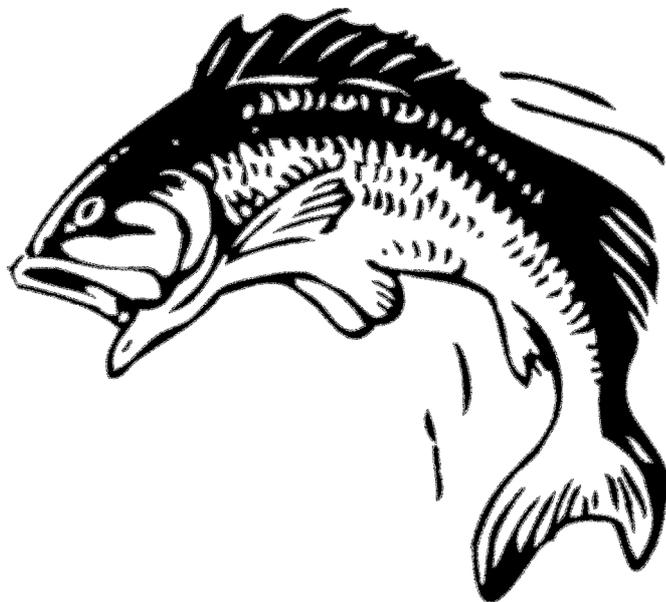
*'Feed My sheep,' He told me. Three times He said it.*

*And I knew forgiveness from the look in His eyes*

*Of His great and glorious*

*Love.<sup>2</sup>*

Sometimes things that have happened in our past stop us from seeing the opportunities that lie ahead of us. Sometimes we are unable to see that if we stop what we have always done before, there is a new way. Jesus told the disciples to throw their nets on the other side. Could it be that they had fished from the same side of the boat all night? When they did as He told them they caught many fish. What are you doing the same way that Jesus may be calling you to change? What would happen if you were to meet Him on the beach and be given a new command – 'Feed My sheep – follow Me.'?



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<sup>2</sup> MH

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## FAMILY TIME

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As a family, set yourself a project to do for God.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday: John 21:1-23**

*What are you doing in the same way that you have always done that Jesus may now be calling you to change?*

Lord, open my spiritual eyes and give me the ability to discern that changes are necessary in my life in order to fulfill the call of discipleship.

### **Monday: Matthew 18:2-5**

*Are there changes you have to make in your behaviour to become more like little children? What are they?*

Lord, show me where worldly sophistication and pride have blinded me. Where I have become jaded in my outlook regarding my faith, restore a humble and childlike faith.

### **Tuesday: Acts 5:29-32**

*The NIV uses the word repentance (v31) which means a turning away from; a change of heart. Thinking back to yesterday, where is God calling to you to repent and experience a change of heart?*

Forgive me, Lord ... Thank You for Your grace and forgiveness... I commit to change

### **Wednesday: Luke 5:1-7**

*How do you feel when God tells you to try again after you have not had any success? What is your response?*

Lord Jesus, I choose to be faithful as Your disciple – I acknowledge my weakness and inadequacy and ask Holy Spirit to empower, equip and enable me afresh.

### **Thursday: Luke 5:8-11**

*Do you believe that God can make you a 'fisher of people'? Why/why not? Spend some time telling Him about your reasons.*

Lord Jesus, You use the weak and seemingly foolish to confound the wise and fulfill Your Kingdom purposes. Strengthen me in my resolve to respond to the call.

### **Friday: 2 Corinthians 7:8-13**

*How has God changed your heart and made you more sensitive to others in the past few months? How have you changed as a result?*

Thank You, Lord, that godly sorrow and true repentance can produce a change and transformation in my life. I praise You for the changes that have occurred within me.

### **Saturday: John 6:1-15**

*The disciples were used to Jesus' miracles, but now they were the channels of God's grace to hungry people. How is God calling you to be a channel of His grace in a new way?*

Father God, I offer the little I have to You and pray that what I have to offer will be multiplied exponentially in order that I may be a channel of love, peace, grace and provision to others.

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## SESSION 6

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### WELCOME

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What change have you made recently in any area of your life (boiling an egg; having a child; entering retirement)? Has it been a change for the better or not – why do you say this?

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### WORSHIP

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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### ACCOUNTABILITY

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How did you go and make disciples last week?

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### WORD

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*Read: John 21:1-23*

1. How do you cope with change when someone shows you another way to do something?
2. What would your response be if Jesus had the conversation with you that He had with Peter as they walked on the beach together?
3. Jesus told His disciples that they would be 'fishers of people'. What does this mean to you as a disciple of Jesus today?
4. What has spoken most deeply to you in what you have shared during this session? How will it change your walk with Jesus?

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### MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

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Pray for one another, especially in regard to any changes that need to be made, or challenges that have been received.

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### REACHING OUT

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If Jesus is calling you to change in any way, it will be a blessing to you (even though change may be hard) and to others. How can you use a new way to bless others this week?

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# WAIT FOR THE GIFT

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Acts 1:1-11

**M**any of us do not serve Jesus to our full potential because we do not know how, or feel we are not able to do so. But Jesus does not want us to serve Him alone. He promised a Helper when He left the disciples and this Helper, the Holy Spirit, is available to us too. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His people to empower them to serve Him for generations to come.

*Imagine sitting in the Upper Room. People are talking quietly together in groups, but there is an underlying current of anxiety – and in some cases even of fear. Jesus has gone in a spectacular way, rising into the clouds. He promised that this was not the end and that you were to wait. But what are you waiting for? And for how long must you stay in Jerusalem where it is so very dangerous at the moment?*

*Then you become aware of a change – something in the air. You look around – others are feeling it too*

*... a sound could be heard:*

*A breathing, a sighing, a whisper of nothing,  
The beat of a wing from a gentle young bird.  
A movement of airwaves, a flutter of dresses,  
The tremble of leaves and the beat of a sail,  
The rising of waves on the shores of the river,  
The squall of a storm and the howl of the gale.  
Yet oddly, now, no-one appears to be frightened,  
There's a spirit of triumph, a great shining glow  
That settles on each of the folk who are praising  
Their Father in Heaven for this awesome show.  
On each shining face there's a glow as from fire,  
A flaming of Spirit in each one that meant  
A growing in faith, a flowering of power.  
Could this be the Helper that Jesus has sent?<sup>3</sup>*

*Is this the gift? Suddenly you know you can no longer sit in hiding but have to go out and speak to people about Jesus. As you get up, you see Peter and then Andrew leap to their feet. The women are moving and there is such joy in the room that it is tangible. You spill out into the street praising God – completely unconcerned now about the threat of arrest. What does that matter when you have work to do for the risen Lord? That is what is important. You have been called – and now empowered – and you know that there is nothing else for you to do. Turning to the man walking past you say to him 'Did you know Jesus?' and it sounds strange to your ears in a language you do not recognize, but he obviously does. Where does this courage come from? It can only be the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised! This, this is the birth of the Church that He told you about – the Church of Jesus Christ that He will build – through you – and all who follow Him.*

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<sup>3</sup> MH

We know the rest of the story. And yet there seems to be a reluctance to claim the Holy Spirit gifts that God is waiting to give us. Have you asked God for a gift from the Holy Spirit? What gift is ready for you this Pentecost? How do you (or will you) use it? We too can live lives of extreme power flowing from the Holy Spirit. This is ours for the asking and Jesus is waiting to give each one of us His gift and will show us what to do. The choice is ours. We can choose to sit quietly in the Upper Room – or we can storm the streets, empowered by the Holy Spirit to live and work for the glory of Christ. What will you do this Pentecost? What will your Small Group do?



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## FAMILY TIME

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Discuss the meaning of Pentecost.

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## DEVOTIONS:

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### **Sunday: Acts 2:1-11**

*What would your reaction be if this happened in this week's Small Group session?*

Holy Spirit, revive us today with the same fire and holy zeal that characterized the early Church at Pentecost as we gather together. Come, Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

### **Monday: I Corinthians 12:1-11**

*What is your spiritual gift? If you do not know ask God to reveal it to you. If you do know thank Him for His grace in giving it to you.*

Lord, Your Word says that we are to stir up the gift placed within us. Help me to identify the gift and by Your grace open up doors of opportunity for me to minister in this gift.

### **Tuesday: Acts 19:1-7**

*How do you feel about receiving a spiritual gift and using it for the sake of the Kingdom of God and His glory?*

Holy Spirit, as I receive a spiritual gift may Your transforming power and glory be evident in my life as I share it with others.

### **Wednesday: I Corinthians 1:4-9**

*Paul wrote this to the Corinthian church who did not lack any spiritual gifts. How are you ensuring that your local church does not lack any spiritual gift either?*

Father, give me the discernment, wisdom and grace to recognize the gifts given to others and to encourage and operate in tandem with them.

### **Thursday: Romans 1:11-12**

*Who encourages you in your faith as you use your gift? And who do you encourage?*

Thank You, Lord, for those who have so graciously affirmed and encouraged me as I have sought to utilize the gift given me. Help me to do the same.

### **Friday: I Corinthians 14:1-5**

*How bold are you in using your gift for the benefit of the kingdom of God?*

Lord, I pray that the God-given gifts of the Holy Spirit will operate in such a way that they will strengthen, encourage, affirm and embolden those who choose to rise up and use them.

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**Saturday: Romans 12:3-8**

*How do you use your spiritual gift? How do you dream of using it? Give your dream to God – for He has planted its seed in your heart and He can grow it with you.*

Father, help me to measure and evaluate the gifts You have given me and use them boldly and wisely to glorify Your name.

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**SESSION 7**

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**WELCOME**

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What was the very best birthday present you ever received? Why was it so special?

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**WORSHIP**

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Spend time in song or read a psalm as an act of worship.

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**ACCOUNTABILITY**

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How did you bless others in a new way this week?

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**WORD**

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*Read: Acts 2:1-11*

1. Do you know what your spiritual gift is? Help those who are having difficulty identifying their gifts by telling them what you see in them (sometimes it is difficult to recognize such a gift in ourselves).
2. We can use our spiritual gift without realizing that is what it is. How are you using yours?
3. What would encourage you to use your gift more intentionally for God's glory and His people?

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**MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER**

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Pray together asking God to send the Holy Spirit to empower and encourage you to use your gifts more widely and more intentionally.

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**REACHING OUT**

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What will you do this week that uses your spiritual gift?

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