

# SHARING GOD'S LIFE

## SHARING GOD'S LIFE – A 2018 LENT COURSE FOR THE DIOCESE OF WINCHESTER

### Session 1. Who am I? & Why am I here? (Identity and Vocation)

#### INTRODUCTION

*The leader has several roles in this opening session: first, to help to create a relaxed environment where people can learn and grow together, open to God and to each other. And secondly, to help everyone to become a little more confident in God's love for them, and a little clearer about God's particular invitation to them at this stage in their lives. All of this is essential, because creating a personal Rule of Life is about responding to God's grace.*

Welcome comes before Worship, for this session only.

#### WELCOME (10 minutes)

*These points will help you grow together on your journey – cover them all each session:*

LOOKING BACK: Some people may have worked through the 'Sharing God's Life' leaflet and developed their own Rule of Life already; their experience will be invaluable (and they will be able to review and revise their commitments during this course). Similarly, others may have a Rule of Life from another community, which is fine. Everyone will need to take home a leaflet today.

HERE & NOW: Even if you know each other well, ice-breakers or other introductory activities can keep your relationships fresh. They are very useful for incorporating new people, in which case ask everyone to say their name too. Try 'Say your name, and something about something you're wearing.' (See 'Ideas for ice-breakers'.)

LOOKING FORWARD: Give everyone the **Participant's Guide**, which summarises the five sessions, and explain the structure of each session: Worship, Welcome, Word (Reflection) & Work (Action). Today you will go back to basics, re-visiting your Christian Identity and Vocation.

#### OPENING WORSHIP (5 minutes)

*Some suggestions:*

LISTEN: Use the 'Prayers for Lent', printing or copying enough sheets for everyone. People may like to take a copy to use at home, in which case you could print them double-sided on A4 card (cut lengthways), to make them more durable.

Or choose a **piece of music** and listen prayerfully together, ending with the Prayer of Preparation from Common Worship (**CW Main Volume p.168**).

LOOK: Put a large glass **bowl of water** in the centre of the table, and invite comments on what it might symbolise for Christians. Turn these thoughts into short prayers of praise & thanksgiving; pray also for one another as you begin this course together.

**WORD: What does it say?** (20 minutes)

**Today's Bible reading is Mark 1:9-15.**

**Before you come to the gospel passage, explain that as this session is about OUR Identity & Vocation as Christians, we begin by asking how Jesus understood HIS Identity & Vocation: how would HE have answered these two questions, Who am I? & Why am I here?**

**Engage with today's Bible passage in as many ways as possible.**

Try starting with the 90-second **video clip**.

Encourage group members to express their reactions to this story-telling...

If possible, give everyone a copy of the double-spaced **Bible passage** – and a **pencil**. Before you discuss it, allow a few minutes' silence for each person to reflect on the text, and to mark it in any way they like. Or they can study their own Bibles. Then invite them to share their thoughts & feelings, either as a whole group or in 2s & 3s.

**What does it mean?** (30 minutes)

**Depending on your group, and on the time available, choose a mixture of ideas from more than one of these four sections:**

#### HEAD

Choose a few of these questions, with the focus on our IDENTITY & VOCATION as Christians:

- If we're God's children, then he's our father; if we're God's beloved, then he's our...? How else does Jesus, or the New Testament writers, describe the relationship? (For example, Leader/follower; Teacher/learner; Master/slave; Host/guest; Shepherd/sheep.) Which do people find most helpful?
- Why do we think the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness? What was the purpose of this time? What about OUR wilderness experiences... what purpose might they serve? Are our Lent practices anything like this?
- Give everyone a copy of the **Isaiah 61:1 translations**. Think of some gospel stories which show Jesus fulfilling this prophecy.
- What IS 'the good news of God'? Try explaining it to each other in a sentence or two – perhaps after a couple of minutes making some notes individually. Or try the Tweet Challenge: explain the gospel in 280 characters!
- Are WE called to 'proclaim the good news of God'? If so, what does that mean?

#### HEART

- Ask people to write down three words they'd use to describe themselves, then three words a close relative or friend might use. What three words might GOD use to describe them? How does this relate to verse 11 of the Bible passage?
- Give out copies of the **Who I Am in Christ sheet**, and invite people to notice which statements they feel most & least confident about. They may wish to share in 2s or 3s, and pray for one another, affirming the promises of Scripture.

### HANDS

- Mime the whole narrative. This may work best if you divide the group into two halves, and prepare separately, so both groups have an audience to present their mime to. Allow time to discuss the experience afterwards.
- Spend some time on the **colouring sheet** for this session. You'll need coloured pencils or felt pens. Or you might give everyone the sheet to take home.

### HUNCH

- Go deeper with one of the 'Heart' suggestions, inviting people to become aware of what God, their loving Father, might want to say to them. Or you might suggest that, in pairs, people listen to God for each other...
- Use the **Lectio Divina** approach, perhaps in conjunction with the double-spaced **Bible passage**. Allow plenty of time for reflection, with no pressure to share or discuss.

### **WORK: How does it apply? (10 minutes)**

***Help people to take away something which will continue to foster their deepening sense of Identity as God's beloved children, and their grasp of their personal Vocations:***

### INDIVIDUALLY

- Allow time for everyone to reflect on what God might want to say to them about who they are in his eyes – their God-given Identity. How might they live differently tomorrow if they really believed that? The **Who I Am in Christ sheet** may be useful.
- In exploring their Vocation, the **Isaiah 61:1 translations** are a good place to start: people could try writing a sentence beginning, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me to...'
- The **Discover your Gifts sheet** is an interesting way of clarifying Vocation; group members might like to discuss it with each other, or with other people outside the group.

### IN 2s OR 3

- Invite people to talk about who they know who needs to hear 'the good news of God', and how they might begin to share it with them. Agree to pray for each other during the week.

### AS A GROUP

- Memorise a Scripture about our Identity and Vocation in Christ, for example Ephesians 2:10 '**For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.**' (New Living Translation)

***Before you close, encourage people to make some jottings in their Participant's Guide – and allow a moment's quiet for this.***

### **CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)**

***Some suggestions:***

**LOOK:** If you used the **colouring sheet**, spread them out on the table and quietly enjoy one another's creativity. Give thanks for who God has made you, with all your gifts.

**LISTEN:** Ask the group to close their eyes while you re-read aloud the passage from Mark 1, then allow some moments of silence before closing with The Grace.

DO: Provide a **bowl of water** and invite people to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, in memory of their baptism. You could read the Collect from the Baptism service (**CW Main Volume p.350**), or another prayer.

***Give everyone a 'Sharing God's Life' leaflet to read before the next session.***

