



FAITH Pictures

SESSION 3: TRAVELLERS' TALES



In the last session we saw that it's easier to talk about things we enjoy, and that each of us has our own distinctive experience of faith. In this session we'll take a look at our own journey, where and how we have been aware of God, and how we might start to think about the shape of that journey.



DISCOVER:

Video: Travellers' Tales

- *Is there anything that stood out that the stories had in common?*
- *What made them distinct?*



DIVE IN:

- Telling our faith story means telling the truth about what we've experienced. Our stories should be honest, authentic, and reflect who we are and what we've experienced. They may be messy, they will certainly be unfinished, and they will have more twists and turns to come. But understanding our own experience is the first step to being able to share our faith with others.
- Traditionally we have thought of a testimony, or a story about how someone came to faith, as having the following structure:
 - Before Jesus
 - Encounter Jesus
 - Now I am changed
- Alternatively, you might think of a faith journey as:
 - Always known God
 - Need to acknowledge faith for my own
 - Now - how has this changed you?

- Do either BEN or ANN describe your own faith journey? Is this a helpful way to think about faith?
 - Leaders explain that each of our faith stories will be unique, and may not conform to either of the above patterns. We should reflect on our own story, rather than try and make it like others.
- It is important that we get an idea of our own story before we try and communicate it to anyone. Often we get caught up in just living our lives, and not taking the time to stop and reflect. When we do this we can lose sight of where God has been active in our lives, where we have changed because of Him, and can feel like our faith doesn't, and won't, make a difference to us.

Give everyone in your group a piece of paper, and have them draw a line across the middle of it. On one end, get them to write **Birth**, and at the other end **Today**. Give everyone about 10 minutes to think back over their lives, and pick out three or four times that have been key moments in their journey of faith.

- Make it clear that these don't need to be spiritual, or church-related moments, but could be very mundane things. Some people have found God speaking to them through very normal everyday things, others through boredom or daydreaming.
- There doesn't need to be any pattern to what they are writing: it could be a sudden profound moment, or it could be a long slow awakening; it could be a revival of a childhood faith, or it could be none of those.
- Once you have all done this, encourage the group to pray and ask God to help you recall anything that you might have forgotten about but that is important within your journey.
- If nothing else comes to mind, then ask everyone to put their timeline somewhere safe for next week. If, over the course of the week, they think of new things to put on then let them know they are more than welcome to.



GOING DEEPER:

All stories are curated and edited to some extent - it's how we make sense of the world around us. For a long time, it seems like Paul has been our ideal of what a conversion looks like - a sudden and abrupt transformation into an almost unrecognisable person - and so maybe we have edited our own story to fit that idea more closely.

Let's look at another example to see what a slightly different journey of faith might look like, that of Peter.

- Called by Jesus to follow Him (Matthew 4)
- First to name Jesus as Saviour (Matthew 16)
- Told by Jesus that he just didn't get it (Matthew 16)
- Denied even knowing Jesus (Matthew 26)
- Preached on Pentecost (Acts 2)
- Leader of the Church (various)

- Fell out with Paul over the way he treated Gentiles differently (Galatians 2)
 - Was killed for his beliefs (post-New Testament)
- At what point did Peter become a Christian? When exactly did Peter understand what it meant to follow Jesus?
- Peter feels like a very human Christian, sometimes understanding what he was supposed to do, sometimes completely getting it wrong and sometimes muddling his way through the middle of it all.
- If you were to think of an image to try and capture Peter's journey of faith, what would it be? What would represent the up and down, back and forth journey of Peter? Have a look at the images below to see if any help you:





DRAW NEAR:

It is important that we take the things we have been talking and thinking about to God in prayer. For this course, the prayers at the end of the session will be split into three parts; feel free to use as many or as few of them as you want.

HEAD - THOUGHT

Are there any ideas that have been challenging, comforting, or completely new to you? Bring these thoughts to mind and spend a moment talking to God about them.

HEART - FEELINGS

What has been the strongest emotion you have felt over the course of the session? What caused it? Is it positive, negative, or are you not sure?

HANDS - ACTIONS

Is there a thing you feel you want to do as a result of what has been chatted about during the session? Is God telling you something through that? If it feels appropriate, you could ask people to put on a communal piece of paper what they feel this is, but make sure it's clear that they don't have to. If you do this, take a picture of it or save it some other way, and if it feels appropriate, ask next week how this went.

DRAWING IT TOGETHER

If you are comfortable doing so, say the Lord's Prayer together:

*Our Father in Heaven
Hallowed be Your Name
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done
On Earth as in Heaven
Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our sins*

*As we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the Kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen*