

Together in Mission

Introductory reading:

In the last session we considered what it might look like to be on a mission together as a married couple. What does it mean to know God and to make him known? How do we leave a spiritual legacy? God's mission isn't limited to married couples; some of the most fruitful and inspiring men and women of God have been single. Indeed marriage can bring with it obstacles to mission. Paul talks about these in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. But marriage, especially a healthy one, is a window to the gospel and gives us a particular opportunity to share the good news of the gospel with others as we encourage, pray for and help one another in sharing our faith. If family is truly the building block of society, inviting someone into yours can be a powerful witness to being a part of God's family. As the apostle John writes: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:35)

Our Responsibility

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Romans 10:14-15

Think back to how you first found out about the good news of Jesus. The chances are you heard it from someone else and witnessed their life-example first-hand. These verses in Romans tell us that this is God's chosen method for growing his kingdom. Sharing our faith is not something to leave to the experts, but part of God's commission to us as believers. For most of us, this is a rather daunting task! Where do we even start?

Breaking it down frees us

The gospel is wonderfully simple - it's a truth accessible to all, but so often we feel overwhelmed or inadequate. Fear can overcome us as we consider talking with our co-worker, team-mate or fellow parent in the playground. Even though it is something that has changed *our* life, fear of failing can be a barrier before we've started, not even giving ourselves the chance to fail.

Maybe we have fixed ideas of how we share the gospel such as inviting a friend to an event to hear an expert preach. Or we might have fixed ideas on *when* we share the gospel: only if they agree to come to church with us *or* we launch into a gospel presentation when they're least expecting it. Or perhaps we have specific ideas on *what* we share; they have to understand complex theology or we just need to tell them Jesus loves them. All these things can set us up for failure or limit what we feel confident we can do in helping someone take the steps to know Jesus as their saviour.

In this session we will look at how we can break down the process into doable steps. They should be steps you are likely to succeed in to free us from that fear of failing. When we step out in faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, God uses us. Stepping out in faith will look different

to all of us, including within a marriage. For some it may be offering to pray for someone, for another it might be mentioning that you're a christian. This should not be a burden but an exciting mission where all of us have something we can trust God for and do.

Called to be intentional

We are all on God's mission. Have you ever been in a small group where you've talked about doing outreach but don't seem to get beyond praying for people and opportunities to share the gospel? Praying together is indeed an excellent and essential first step! But we may feel if we haven't brought the person to the point of making a decision for Christ then what's the point? This indeed is our end goal and in order to reach it we need to be intentional with our steps along the way. If we imagine that praying for a friend to know Christ is our first step, and their asking Jesus into their life is the final step, we will need to be intentional with the 3, 5, 15 or 20 steps in between. This session will help you think about what those steps might be; relevant, doable, intentional steps. You will have some tools in your belt so that every friendship and connection you have can be an opportunity for you to help someone in their journey to know Christ. Being intentional is so much easier when you're working as a couple as you '*spur one another on to love and good deeds*'.

Group Session (90 minutes in total)

Feedback (10 mins)

- What insights did you gain from your couple time following the session on leaving a legacy that will last forever?
- Was there anything from the introductory reading on Together in Mission that prompted you to think about the subject in a new way? Explain.

Section A Things hold us back, but we all have something to share. (5 minutes)

When we think about sharing our faith we can encounter a range of emotions and ideas. We might imagine the hurdles to overcome or be gripped by a sense of inadequacy or just not know where to start. We might have tried many times before but seen little fruit and wonder why. But in any relationship with another person there will be steps we **can** take.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

1 Peter 3:15

1. How does the thought of sharing your faith make you feel?

Foundation Principle: We often have barriers to sharing our faith but we all have something to share.

A Things hold us back but we all have something to share . 3 mins

i. Tick which things hold you back when it comes to sharing your faith:

ill-equipped

don't know how to explain the gospel

no non-christian friends

too busy

not my responsibility/I'm not an evangelist

fears of failure

fear of what people will think of me

the law about sharing faith at work

I've never done anything like this with my spouse before

Other:

ii. Think back to a time when you did share your faith. What do you think it was about that situation that made it easy to share?

In your couple time be prepared to talk about your answers.

Section B (10 mins)

Bible Study

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

"He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?" Mark 4:21

1. We see from Acts 1:8 that the disciples will be Jesus' witnesses. What does it mean for us to be a witness of Jesus?
2. What do we learn about sharing our faith from Mark 4:21?

Witnessing is about a person's whole life. The way you act and the way you speak. We can get stuck in a cycle of praying for opportunities to share the Gospel without having or taking opportunities to share. When we break down sharing the Gospel into smaller steps, the individual steps become easier to recognise, pray for and then take.

The Biscuit Trail (40 mins)

The biscuit trail is a resource that has been designed to help us witness by breaking down sharing the Gospel into smaller steps. We'll be using it in this section to help us do just that.

It is said that you would never force a whole packet of biscuits in someone's mouth. You would offer them one biscuit at a time. Each card is an individual step (or 'biscuit') that you could take, in faith, to help those around you on their spiritual journey.

The Biscuit Trail (you will want a copy per couple)

1. In pairs read through the front of the cards to quickly familiarise yourself with steps. Leave reading the back of the card for later.

Now take one set of the cards and spread them out in the middle of the group

2. Working together, put the cards in the order you think you would try them; beginning with the steps you would do first and moving on to those you would do last. Discuss your choices as a group.

(aside no right or wrong answer, we each have steps that we find easier/more difficult. Each context and person is different. If in your context people are not speaking to one another then the first step will be to change that!)

3. Discuss which cards you feel comfortable doing and which you feel uncomfortable doing. Pull out the 'uncomfortable' cards and discuss ways to approach those steps and grow in confidence. Using the back of the cards as a guide discuss the following two questions.

Which of the 'Be Prepared' points do you find the most challenging?

Has anyone had a personal experience that could help others with this step?

(Aside: remember the listening skills (active and reflective listening) you practised in session 5 (pg 89). These skills are really helpful in many of the biscuit trail steps.)

4. Identify someone that you meet on a regular basis that you would like to help on their spiritual journey. In faith, choose one 'biscuit' that would be appropriate as a first step. Read the back of the card to the group. Pray as a group for these people and the steps that each will take.

Foundation Principle: Breaking down the steps to witnessing helps us to be intentional about taking the next step!

The biscuit trail was designed for the workplace but it is easily transferable to other contexts too so take a minute to think about a context where you meet people outside of work e.g. neighbours, school gate or a team, group or club you are part of.

Now take it in turns to share the context and discuss what next steps would be most useful in your context. (The idea here is to begin thinking about applying the biscuit trail steps to the whole of our lives.)

B Making the gospel bite-sized 5mins

Make a list of up to 5 specific people that you would like to help know God.

Write down a next step (biscuit) for each person?

How can you be better prepared to take this next step?

Which of the biscuit trail steps do you feel least equipped to carry out?

In your couple time, be prepared to share what next steps you can take.

Section C (15 mins)

In this section we are exploring witnessing as a couple. As we witness together we share a common purpose and we grow together. In section two we broke down sharing the gospel into small steps. Now we are looking at how to incorporate those steps into our family lives.

Sharing in our witnessing falls into three categories. People that we know together and can 'witness to together', people that only one of us knows where 'one shares and the other facilitates space to share' and 'praying together'.

overlap of spheres of influence:



1. What has your experience of witnessing together been like? (this may be a new idea for you as a couple, if so use the steps in the biscuit trail to help you identify steps you have already taken together.)

The biscuit trail can form a framework for discussing and praying together about how you both witness Jesus. Our hope is that discussions about the people on your hearts, helping one another to think about the appropriate next steps, praying for those people and sharing stories of one another's successes and failures will become part of your prayer life.

There are additional discussion guides available at: www.biscuittrail.com

Foundation Principle: We grow together as we witness together.

C Together in witnessing (3 mins)

Where do the people you listed in Box B fit into the circles above? Write down their names in the appropriate circle.

Think about ways to help your spouse to be more effective in their witness?

Write down one way you could share your faith together.

In your couple time be prepared to talk about your answers

What next? (5 mins)

As you've looked through the Biscuit Trail cards, were there any steps you felt you weren't equipped for? (See Box B) e.g. sharing your story or developing your listening skills further?

....And finally

Take a minute to review the foundation principles for this session.

Agree on a date in your diaries for your couple time:

Couple Time: 60 minutes (goal is for couple to set aside time to talk about people they want to be sharing with perhaps 7 as a couple 2 or 3 in each circle)

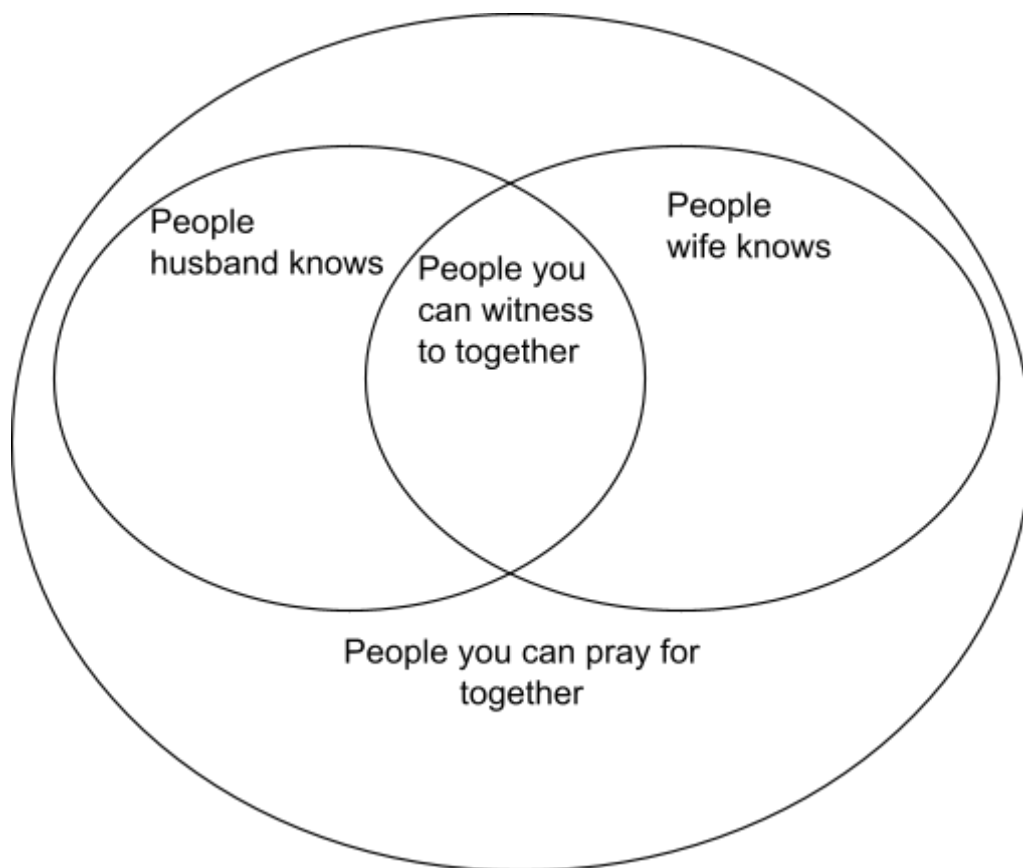
A: Where you start from in witnessing:

Share about your previous experience and what you hope for or dream about in witnessing. (hurts, hopes, vision). Identify a personal action point if required.

Personal action point:

B: Witnessing together,

Combine your answers from the circles in Section C below.



Talk about the different contexts in your lives. Which ones do you share? Which are separate? What ideas do you have for working together in these contexts? You might find it helpful to think about; ways to bring people into a shared context e.g the home or office party; or ways in which you can create time for each other to witness. Identify a personal action point if required.

Personal Action Point.

C Praying together

The key to growing together through mission is to talk and pray together, encouraging one another.

- Share about the people who are on your heart to share with and the next steps you plan to take. Pray for these people together and make a note of the steps planned.
- Plan a regular time to share how your planned next steps have gone. Share what you did and what happened, then talk together about what the new next steps are.

Often you'll find that action points roll over but at the same time you'll have taken other steps in witnessing as you are more ready to take the opportunities that present themselves to you.