

Grass Roots

DIOCESE  
OF EXETER  
THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
IN DEVON



**Grass Roots is a collection of ideas and activities written to encourage us to think about how we follow Jesus. Jesus wanted his friends and disciples to understand who he was, and where they could find the Kingdom he talked about so often. As followers of Jesus today, these are important ideas for us to explore, and we hope that this resource supports you on your journey.**

This has been made by the Diocese of Exeter, the group of Churches based in Devon which are part of the Church of England. You might be listening to this, reading it, or looking at it. Grass Roots is available as a magazine, an audiobook, a powerpoint, a PDF file, and in video format. You can get hold of these things, via our website [exeter.anglican.org/grass-roots](http://exeter.anglican.org/grass-roots)



Grass Roots is split into four parts, which aim to help you explore these ideas. You can do this on your own, or in a group. Talking about these things might be helpful to you, or thinking on your own might work better. You might be reading this or listening to this on the recommendation of someone else; maybe your church is spending some time on this together, or perhaps you've found this by yourself.

The hope is that after these four parts, you could have discovered a step to take, and will feel confident to try it. These steps might be completely practical, or based on how you do something.



You may have an internal thought, or a new way to try and understand something. All of these options are great - there are no better or worse steps to take. This process doesn't have to be under your own strength; be encouraged by the fact that, in the words of St Paul, 'the Spirit of God lives in you' and 'the Spirit gives life' (Romans 8:9-10). Paul is serious when he says that if you are positive about this possibility 'you can be transformed'. (Romans 12:2).



Transformation can seem like a terrifying idea, but actually these changes will happen slowly - you might not even notice them, but when you look back, you may well be surprised at where you've travelled from.

The four parts that we're exploring here are...

- Appreciating Our Own Context
- Being Aware (and realistic) About Who We Are
- Growing as a Disciple
- Building the Body of Christ

The principle activities in each part are...

1. Thinking and doing
2. Discussing
3. Seeing and hearing
4. Quiet and prayer





# Appreciating Our Own Context



Here's a prayer,  
that you might like to think or say:

Lord, you have always marked  
the road for the coming day,  
and although it may be hidden,  
help me to believe.

Amen

FROM COMMON PRAYER BY  
JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE  
AND SHANE CLAIBORNE



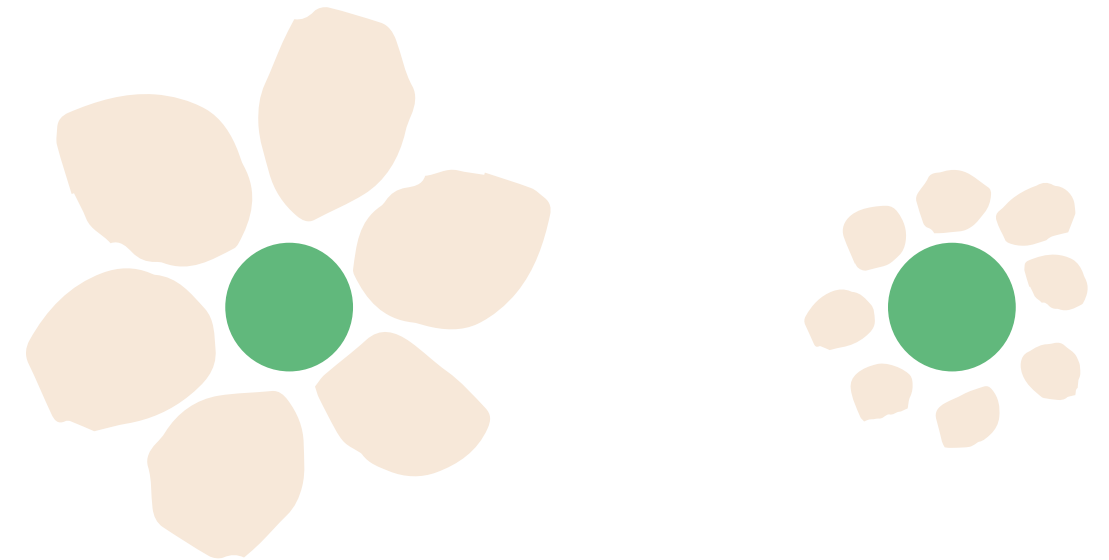
## PART #1 FOCUSES ON...

Who we are and how we see things

Who Jesus' disciples in the Bible were,  
and how they might have seen things

Why seeing and noticing is important

So, we're going to start by thinking about how we see things, and knowing what our point of view is. If something is close to us, we have a different view of it than if it is further away. We might know and understand where we are when we see something, and realise what might get emphasised or what might be missing from our viewpoint.



For example, as strange as it might seem, both green circles here are the same size, but appear different because of how they are placed, and what they are placed next to.



As another example, these two images are of the same pyramids in Giza, Egypt. The left hand image suggests an isolated desert position, much like we imagine Egypt to have been in the past. But, the right hand image shows us a different perspective, from above, and highlights the nearness of the city. Neither image is any more correct, but they both show us different realities. You can imagine being disappointed if you were expecting to find these monuments in a tranquil setting, unchanged for thousands of years. You can also imagine being delighted if you ran out of water while on the sandy side of these buildings, and then realised that the local shop was not as far away as you feared. Your attitude towards these things is different, depending on your circumstances.



The third set of images capture a march undertaken by a significant number of world leaders in 2015 in support of the attacked French magazine Charlie Hebdo and their expressions of free speech. The New York Times reported that 'more than a million people joined over 40 presidents and prime ministers on the streets of Paris on Sunday'. The initial image confirms that those presidents and prime ministers were on a street in Paris. The perspective of the left hand image shows these significant politicians at the front of a great throng, which when seen alongside the report of over a million others on the streets makes us believe that those million were on this street, and therefore our leaders were at the forefront of those people, leading in a symbolic and literal way.

In truth, the second image shows that the million other people were not behind them on this street, but on another street entirely. We can presume that there were reasons for this choice, but we might well feel disappointed by this truth. The parade has a very different feel, thanks to a different perspective. The original conclusions we have made might well change because of this newly gained understanding.

**We can sometimes assume that our current view is the only one we are likely to have, or the only one that matters.**



These are some questions to help you start thinking about who you are, and what the world is like for you...



- How would you describe where you live?
- What are the top five words that describe your personality?
- Are you comfortable taking risks?
- Do you like rules?

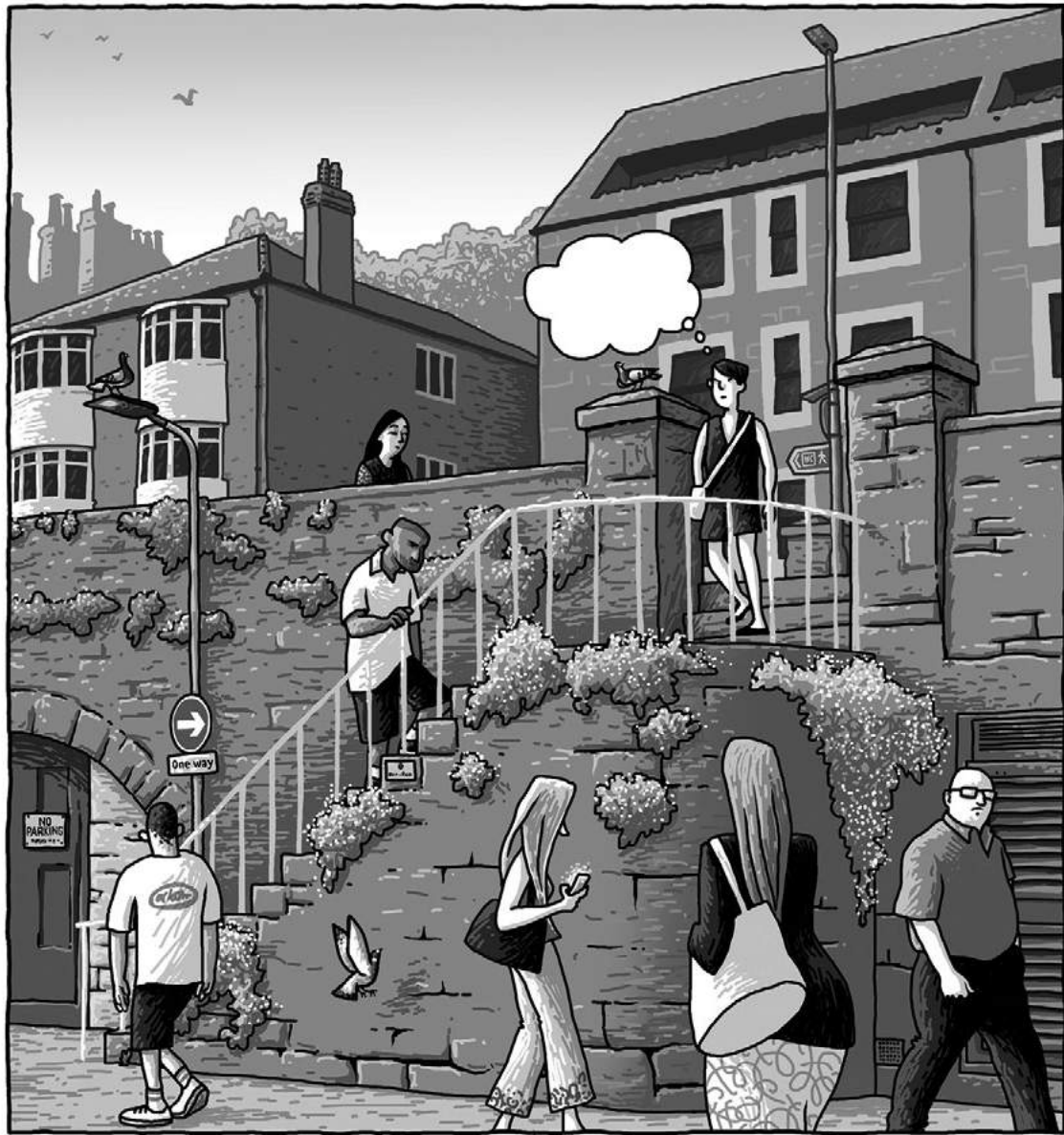


- Are you a morning person or a night person?
- Do you say yes (or no) too much?
- If money didn't exist, what would you be doing or what would you have done with your time?
- What new activities are you interested in, or willing to try?
- What are your values, and what do you believe in?
- Where do you feel safest?
- How much sleep do you need?
- What can you identify that has formed you or made you like this?



All of these elements added together give you a certain perspective. This perspective is unique because you are unique.

Of course, the other side of this is that someone else's answers lead them to a different perspective. These answers might be worth sharing with someone else, so you can compare how you look at things.



**Discuss or think:**

- What do you care about?**
- What do you do with your time?**
- What things are valuable to you?**

**Now, try and think about someone who is the exact opposite of you:**

*(if that's hard to imagine, break it down into small pieces – if you're from a city, what might someone from the countryside think? If you struggle to pay the bills, what might it be like to be wealthy? If you're older, how might you feel today if you were young?)*



- What does that other person care about?**
- What do they do with their time?**
- What things are valuable to them?**

Thinking about who we are and how we see things can be helpful. So too can trying to understand someone else's hopes, fears and feelings. We might be inclined to think the followers of Jesus in the Bible are completely different to us, but actually, we really are just like them. They had a variety of outlooks; big fears, small hopes, and often no idea what to do next.

John Wesley, the founder of The Methodist Church wrote this: 'Be not ye like their disciples, censuring others, and not amending yourselves'. In other words, don't strongly disapprove of what other people do when you're not taking care of your own behaviour. Or, in plainer terms – we've all got stuff we're struggling with – don't be too hard on other people, but also don't be too hard on yourself.

With this in mind, we're going to think about **who Jesus' disciples were in the Bible, and how they felt about the life they now had, after deciding to follow Jesus.**

There are a lot of different stories in the New Testament about Jesus and his disciples. Some of them are meant to make us laugh, and some are intended to challenge us. Although we are often told that Jesus had ‘Twelve Disciples’, or ‘Apostles’, the title can actually refer to any of those people who saw themselves as Jesus’ followers, including people like Mary, Martha and Zaccheus.



[image provided by www.thebricktestament.com]

**These stories are just four of many:**

**From Mark 6:6-11:**

“Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve Disciples to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

**From Luke 4:14-15:**

“As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus said to them, “Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people.” At once they left their nets and went with him.



He went a little farther on and saw two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in their boat getting their nets ready. As soon as Jesus saw them, he called them; they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and went with Jesus.’

**From Luke 10:38-42:**

‘As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”



The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.”

**From Luke 19:1-8:**

‘Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, “Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.”

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, “This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!” Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.””





As you read these narratives, which words come to mind when thinking about how these disciples might have felt in these situations? These words might be a helpful starting point...

**excited / scared / worried / sad / happy / bored / naïve / underprepared / over-prepared / unsure / certain / surprised / unsurprised / intrigued / confused /**



A  
disciple  
is...

A  
disciple  
might be...

A  
disciple  
isn't...



**With these stories (and characters) in mind, try and add some words or pictures that might fit next to, near, or far away from these sentence starters. There aren't any wrong answers; you might want to say that 'a disciple isn't... necessarily an expert', or 'a disciple is... a normal person'.**

In practical terms, Rowan Williams (in his book *Being Disciples*) thinks that the key value of a disciple are 'being aware and attentive'. This might be something that someone is already doing, or it might be a change for them. To put it another way, there might be a men's football team I am interested in supporting. I might have a vague idea that men's football largely occurs on Saturday afternoons between August and April. I might guess when the next game is, or ask people who might know. If I assume that Torquay United are playing football on their own pitch at 3pm on Saturday, and make my way to Plainmoor accordingly, but in truth, they're playing at that same time in Hartlepool instead, it would be impossible for me to actually see that game.



In order to get to Hartlepool from my Devon home, I would have to check in advance about the location of the fixture, book a train ticket and leave home with enough time to make that journey if I hoped to watch that game of football. Or, I might instead understand that I wouldn't be able to travel that distance, so instead would tune into the commentary of the match on Radio Devon, and listen from home, so that I would be able to understand and enjoy what was happening without actually seeing the action. But both of these potentially successful outcomes would rely upon me understanding how to attend a football match, knowing a bit about English geography, having the money for a ticket, or grasping which radio station is likely to cover such a game of football, and owning a radio too!

To follow that team I need to be both aware of how football in England works, and attentive to the particular details that will help or hinder my chances of successfully following Torquay United.

Now, my following of Torquay United can be an active thing, because Torquay United play football on a regular basis – they are current participants in a national league competition, and their fortunes as a team wax and wane throughout the year. But throughout the summer months, little football is played. I might still consider myself a supporter of that club, but there is little to challenge or encourage my support because the club's sole purpose is on hold while cricket (or some other summer sport) takes place. Essentially, my supporting is passive while I await new events. At a point, my waiting will end, either because the football restarts, or I stop being attentive to the team. Perhaps I haven't managed to watch or listen to a game featuring Torquay United for some years. In fact, the last time I went to Plainmoor was when Torquay beat Leeds United 4-0 in the FA Cup in 1955. Every time my neighbour goes to a match, I ask them if Don Mills (the captain of the team that day) is still playing. I am either unaware, or willingly stubborn about the fact that Don Mills died in 1994. Thus my lack of awareness is highlighted. I am not really following Torquay United. I used to support them, but I now no longer do. My following has stopped. I have chosen to stop being attentive. I have decided that I no longer want to be aware of any new developments, or gain any more understanding.

### **In contrast...**

every time the new season starts, I buy tickets for the matches and tune my radio back into Radio Devon. I watch the home games, listen to the away matches, learn about the new players, subscribe to podcasts about Torquay United, read the match reports in the paper, and buy the new replica shirt every August. I find new heroes to join Don Mills on the pantheon of who I consider to be all-time great players, and I enjoy and value the presence of that club in my town. I remain aware and attentive, and with my Torquay United supporting friends, I thrive because of the purpose of this involvement. The value of the football club in my life grows as I invest more of my time and energy into it, and the football club benefits from my engagement with it.

If we think about those disciples again, in the light of this idea, imagine if Peter had stopped listening to Jesus after he called them from their boats. Perhaps he thought that this incident on the beach was the pinnacle of their journey together. He spent the rest of his days reminiscing about the success of the beach days, and how it all changed for the worse when they started heading towards Jerusalem. Thankfully for the church, this didn't happen. Peter knew there was more to see, hear and absorb about Jesus and the Kingdom he spoke about. He stayed aware and attentive not just for the rest of Jesus'

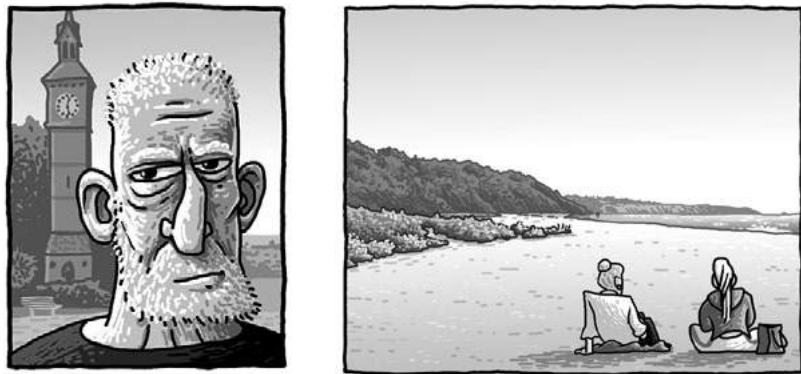
time on Earth, but from then on, for the rest of his own life. Because of that attitude, he saw amazing things happen on the day of Pentecost, he heard different ways of thinking about God through people like Cornelius, and in his own dreams, and those incidents challenged and changed him. As far as we can know, he never stopped being open to learning more.

Proverbs 18:15 wants us to know that ‘a wise person’s ear seeks knowledge’, or in other words as Rowan Williams believes, being a disciple means to be someone who keeps watching, listening and learning. There’s no magic, or celebrity, or certificates to it. Just watching, listening and learning as an ongoing process.



**Doing / Thinking**

Spend some time this week being aware and attentive, to see if you can see, hear or feel God in the world, your friends, family and neighbours, in yourself.



**In part #1 we have thought about...**

- 1. Who we are and how we see things
- 2. Who Jesus’ disciples in the Bible were, and what their perspective might have been.
- 3. Why being aware and attentive is important

Here’s the same prayer, that you might like to think about, or say again

Lord, you have always marked the road for the coming day, and although it may be hidden, help me to believe.

Amen

FROM COMMON PRAYER BY JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE AND SHANE CLAIBORNE



# Being Aware (and Realistic) About Who We Are



Here's a prayer,  
that you might like to think or say:

Alone with none but thee,  
my God, I journey on my way.  
What need I fear when you are  
near, O King of night and day?  
More safe am I within your hand.  
Than if a host should round  
me stand.

Amen

(ATTRIBUTED TO ST COLUMBA)



PART #2 FOCUSES ON...

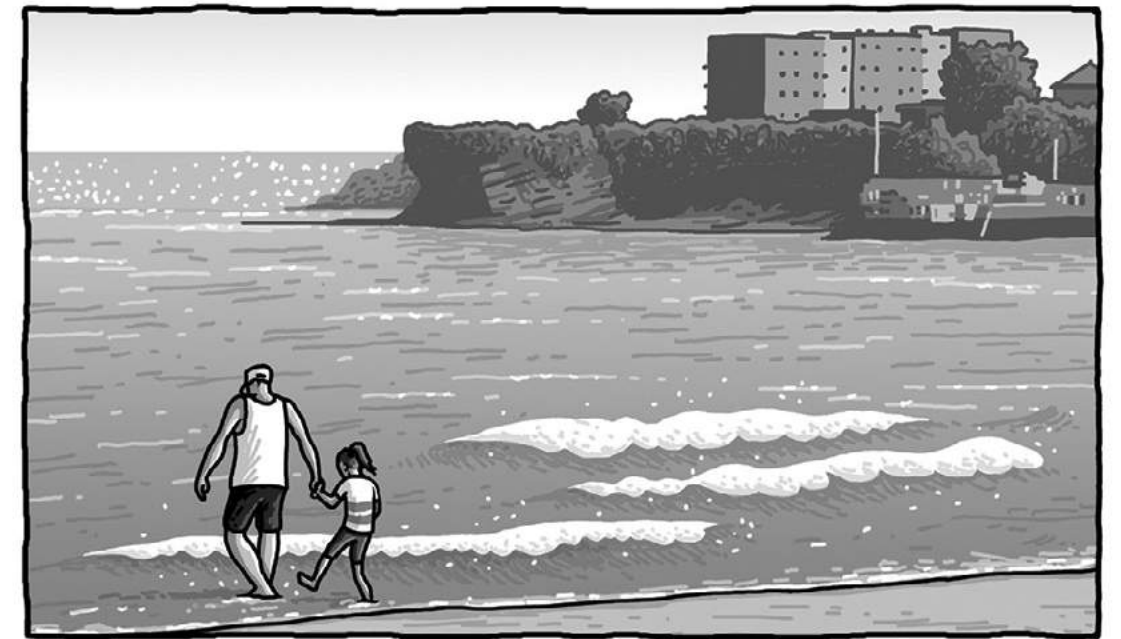
Seeing what a disciple  
might look like

Finding the next pathway to take



As we discussed earlier, Rowan Williams says that being a disciple is about "being aware and attentive".

Dr Williams wants us to see what happened to some of those who were starting to be intrigued by Jesus (from John 1:37-39); 'They followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him.



Spending time with Jesus helped them to hear what he was saying, know what he meant, and see what he was doing.

Discuss or think:  
What different kinds of seeing happen with these items?

How or what do they help us to see?

Do they all help?

Does any one of them do everything?

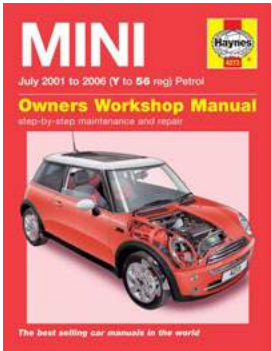
Do they tell the whole story?



X-ray



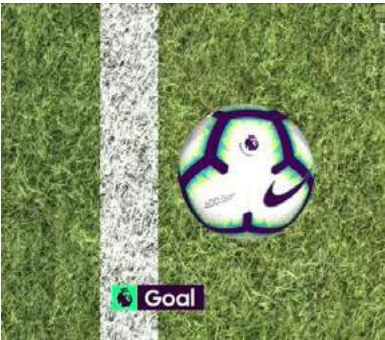
Camera



Motor manual



Virtual reality headset



Goal line technology



Eye glasses



Magnifying glass

It's worth remembering, for example, that the X-Ray helps us to know if a bone is broken in that hand, but it tells us very little about the person.

It's also worth remembering that some understanding can be gained from any outlook, but each of us have to be willing to see. This willingness isn't a speculative thing, but it is our mindset that makes us willing. George Eliot once wrote that "We must not sit still and look for miracles; get up and doing, and the Lord will be with thee". In other words, get out and about and see what you can do.

Jesus shows us throughout his life, recorded in scripture that his disciples (including us) need to be inclined towards growing as people. If we think about Peter's choice to follow when he was called from the boat, he wasn't just sticking with what he knew.



How do you approach challenges? Perhaps your instinct is to avoid change and challenge. This is completely understandable, but maybe is something worth thinking about. Perhaps you enjoy the idea of a challenge? Either way, it's helpful to think about how those disciples of Jesus in the Bible decided to be...

Those disciples

- Needed to be open to challenge,
- Needed to allow themselves to be inspired
- Were determined in their tasks





However, nothing is recorded in the accounts of the disciples that suggests that had it all sorted. They are often noted as struggling, inept and bewildered!

What made them disciples? They were clearly motivated to see what happened, and they were aware and attentive in these observations - did they know exactly who Jesus was when they started following? No, there's no way that they could have. In fact, even the most devout and long-standing of Christians won't fully know or understand the Christ they follow, or the God they believe in. All they can do is be aware and attentive, and prepared to be know more.



Activity:

What differences and similarities can you name between those first disciples, and you and your friends?

Differences	Similarities

Try and fill this chart in - looking at differences and similarities. Difference doesn't mean 'negative' or vice versa. Do any of these difference or similarities make you less of a disciple? There might be some factors that make it harder; there might be some that make it easier.

Despite, and because of differences...



You are a disciple.

Have you ever run a marathon? Or a half marathon? Or a Park Run? Maybe you've never done those things. Perhaps you've driven in London through the Congestion Charge zone. Or crossed the Tamar Bridge from Devon to Cornwall. In those instances, we have measures and lines that say when we are in one place, or in another. With a race, we have timing chips attached to our shoes or our numbers that start the clock once we cross the start line. But as you might know, a large marathon like the one in London has a really long run up before you even cross the line. You'll be there in the queue, waiting to begin, but it might take a number of minutes before you actually get there. You're part of the race before you even know you've started.



As the Church, we can treat being a disciple like this - we can sometimes think in a way that suggests a person isn't actually following Jesus until they've prayed a particular prayer, or been baptised, or something else... But of course, there's so much more to it than that. Much like the marathon runner, the running has begun before it has officially started at the line. There are even inbetween spaces - the mystery of not knowing which county you're in while you're on the bridge crossing the Tamar. Our discipleship could be happening perhaps before we even know about it, or before we 'make a commitment' (if we ever do in a formal or church sense).

If we think about those early disciples again, we have the big names (Peter, Andrew, James and John for example) who make the choice to physically follow Jesus, leave behind their jobs, their families, their lives and go with Jesus. If the subtexts of the gospels are read a certain way, we could wonder whether Peter and Andrew ever went home again. And yet, the accounts tell

us that there were many people turning out to see Jesus from early on in his travels. Do we believe that they all followed Jesus from this point until his resurrection? No, probably not. But it can be plausibly suggested that some of those listening stayed in touch with what Jesus was doing, and followed in different ways and in different amounts.

We may even want to suggest that the journey of those disciples began before they knew it, and continued at points where they may not have noticed it happening. This might be true of us; we may already think of ourselves as disciples, or we might be on that journey without currently acknowledging it as such a thing.





**Activity:**  
Use the image below to chart some of the significant moments in your life so far. The positive and the negative.

**Discuss:**  
Is there anywhere on your life's journey that you have felt the presence of God?  
  
If so, what did it look like, sound like, feel like?

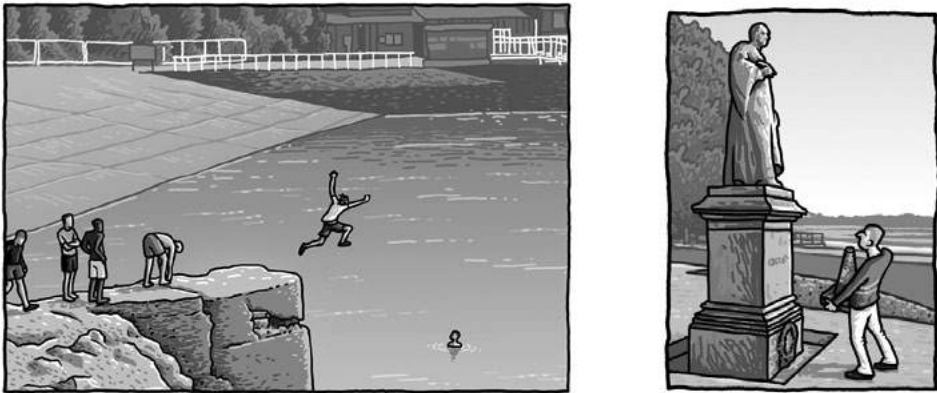
START



The Bible is full of occasions when a person or a group of people encounter God. The following two examples show two ends of the spectrum of these kinds of encounters.

*Genesis 32:22-32*  
That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.



*Acts 16:13-15*  
On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.



What do these two accounts tell us about how we can respond to God?  
How would you picture yourself responding in either of these situations?

- In part #2 we have thought about...
1. Seeing what a disciple might look like

2. Finding the next pathway to take



Here's a prayer,  
that you might like to think or say:

Alone with none but thee,  
my God, I journey on my way.  
What need I fear when you are  
near, O King of night and day?  
More safe am I within your hand.  
Than if a host should round  
me stand.

Amen

(ATTRIBUTED TO ST COLUMBA)

# Growing as a Disciple



Here's a prayer,  
that you might like to think or say:

And in this he showed me something small,  
no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand,  
as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding  
and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that  
it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness  
it would suddenly have fallen into nothing.

And I was answered in my understanding: it lasts and  
always will, because God loves it; and thus everything  
has been through the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three properties.

The first is that God made it,  
the second is that God loves it,  
the third is that God preserves it.

But what did I see in it? It is that God is the  
Creator and the protector and the lover. For until I am  
substantially united to him, I can never have perfect rest or  
true happiness, until, that is, I am so attached to him that  
there can be no created thing between my God and me.

Amen

A PRAYER FROM THE WORDS  
OF JULIAN OF NORWICH



PART #3 FOCUSES ON...

Growing in our faith

Growing the Kingdom of Heaven

**It seems to be clear that “being aware and attentive” can help us to thrive as people and as disciples. However, this journey doesn’t end with us as healthy and happy people.**

In the current trend of us being told that empowerment is key to our happiness, and happiness is only a life-choice away, it’s important to know that the gospel and the kingdom are not self-improvement mechanisms with that outcome as the end goal. Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians that “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” In other words, the Christian is able to thrive because they have set aside their self, which (as much as it might pain us to hear), is where a lot of our troubles come from. And furthermore, Jesus stops being removed from us, and starts being together with us. In the words of James Allison, using God’s voice – ‘we (meaning God as a trinity) will come to them and make our home with them’. (From Knowing Jesus, by James Allison)

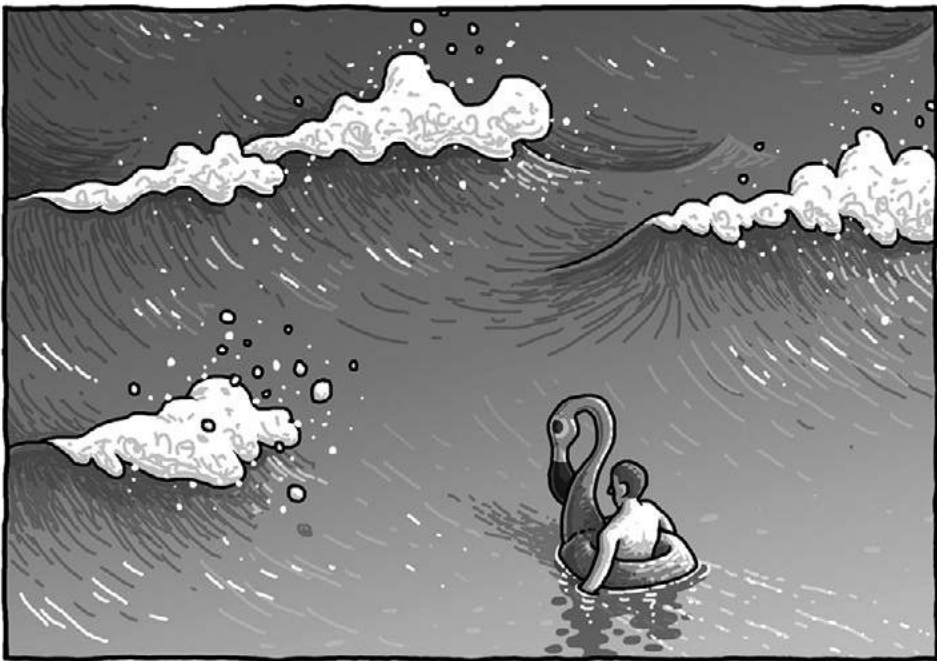




**Discuss or think:**  
**Here's a big question: Do you believe that God could want you to do something? Or, can God use anyone? If he can, then he can use you!**  
**Here's the second question:**  
**What's that got to do with the Kingdom of Heaven?**

Heaven is very often thought of as a place – a place you can't see, but a location (perhaps with a closed door) that we might be let into. The nightclub or awards ceremony that you have to be dressed properly for, and need your name on a list in order to gain entry. The Bible talks about it in these ways sometimes, but Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven (a phrase he often uses), as much wider than this. The Kingdom of Heaven is the place where people love one another like Jesus would love them, where God's plans for the world are closer to being fulfilled. It's not a place that you can physically push your way into, but a way of existing that makes most sense, where justice, peace, hope and righteousness are all visible, and your individual needs no longer seem to matter like they did before.

You don't go to the Kingdom of Heaven like you might go on a holiday in the sun – the Kingdom of Heaven surrounds you and changes you so that your actions and thoughts are those of justice and love – in short, you are transformed. This is God's calling to all of us – to allow ourselves to be transformed, and to stay in the place where this happens. This is God's gift to all of us – that His love can be known, and will help, guide, support, inspire and excite us through everything that's ahead.



The Kingdom of Heaven is the place or state of mind that will help you to get involved in what's going on. The disciples in the gospels entered into it without really knowing that they were doing so – they followed and things happened around them! If they'd moved directly from their boats and fishing nets straight to the Ascension, they wouldn't have understood – the Kingdom of Heaven took some time to take root in their thoughts and feelings.



**It's really worth remembering that every discipleship journey is built upon individual steps. Whether the step seems as huge as James and John leaving their boat and their father, or as normal as the first prayer I ever prayed, these steps are all significant.**



So if we are being aware and attentive, and open to challenge, this will involve taking a step. We don't need to run, but we should try and move. With that in mind, it makes sense to think about which step to take next

- Our step might be one that helps us learn.
- It might be one that helps others.
- It may be something else, but in all of these things, the Kingdom of Heaven will be brought closer to hand.
- You might be thinking about making lunch for your neighbour. You might be thinking about travelling abroad to help medical staff in war zones. Both of these (and all the other acts in-between) are entirely legitimate. No step or calling is worth any more or any less than another.



With that in mind, here are some suggestions (and they are nothing more than that), split into four categories...

Talk or think through these options - why or why not might these ideas appeal to you? What makes it a likely or unlikely option? Which one or more might you think about doing? Remember, these are just ideas - you may well have better ideas.



### 1) Reading

- Re-read the part of the Bible that was preached on in church last Sunday, later in the week.
- Use some reading notes or website to encourage you to read the Bible regularly.
- Use the 'Bible in a year' book or app.
- Join a Bible study group.
- Take part in a Lent or Advent course.
- Join The Bible Society's Bible Book Club, and read a book of scripture .



### 2) Being Quiet

- Try saying a prayer - speak to God about something that you're thinking about.
- Say grace, by thanking God for your food before each meal.
- Set an alarm to remind you to pray.
- Find a system of prayer that helps you, for example using a list of names and places.
- Use a prayer book (traditional or contemporary).
- Set aside regular time for quiet and reflection.
- Go on a day course in prayer, attend a quiet day, or go for a walk and pray as you go.
- Join or start a prayer group.



3) Thinking

- Ask a friend for a book, film or place to visit recommendation that might help you think about something new.
- Listen to Thought For The Day.
- Keep a journal for reflections.
- Explore different courses that exist.
- Sign up to a further discipleship course.
- Take part in a Lent or Advent course.
- Find some good podcasts / recorded sermons.
- Consider the next step of learning—perhaps ‘Foundations in Christian Ministry’, run by SWMTC – there are more details on the Diocese of Exeter website.



4) Help

- Take a cake round for a friend. It doesn’t have to be homemade!
- Invite someone to meet you for a cuppa, drink at the pub or round for a takeaway.
- Volunteer to help at a community event.
- Think and plan how you use your resources for service. This might mean money, time, influence.
- Create an activity around a Christian festival that you can invite people to—ie pancakes!
- Support a pre-existing group or start a new group that fulfils certain needs—lunch club, youth club, volunteering to hear children read in school.

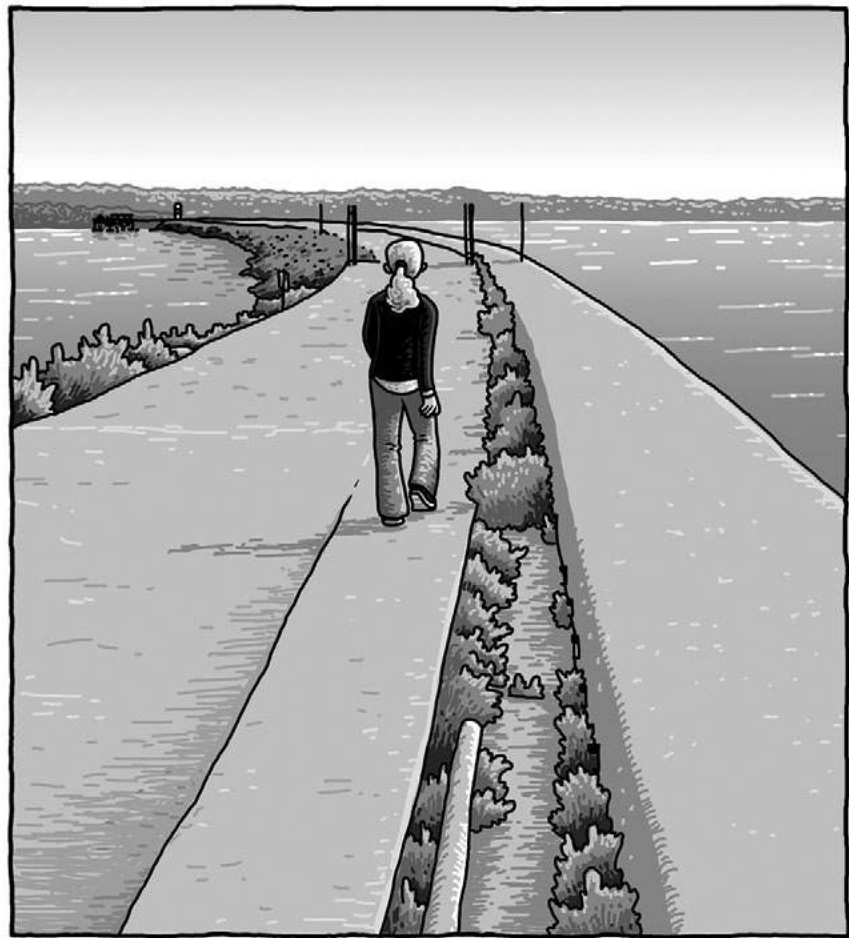
Add your own ideas in this box....



**Whether you're convinced of this or not, the truth is you have the Spirit of God working in you. So, you're not just 'being a Christian' when you're in Church, but being a Christian is your identity when you're everywhere else too.**

Maybe it's worth thinking about it in these terms - you might have been born in Plymouth, lived in Plymouth a really long time. You might have a tattoo of Smeaton's Tower, and support Argyle through the thick and thin. Your Mum might still live there, and your friends are always asking when you're coming back to visit. But you have moved away. You live somewhere else, and so no longer are a resident of Plymouth. But you're from Plymouth. When you go for a run round a London park, you wear your green Argyle shirt. When people ask, you tell them you're from Devon. Being from Plymouth is part of who you are; it's often how you define yourself, and it influences how you feel, what you choose to do, and why you choose to do it.

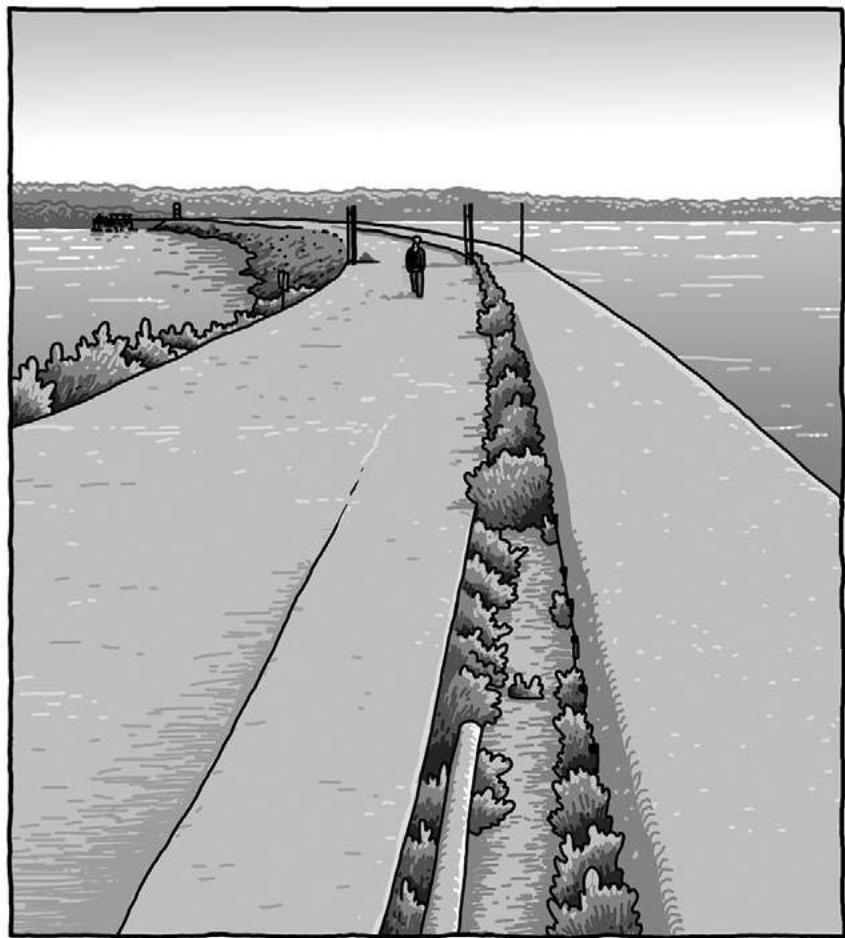
So too can this be true of being a follower of Jesus, or someone who's from 'the kingdom of heaven'. It can define you, influence you, change the views of others around you. And can help you to know what to do next.

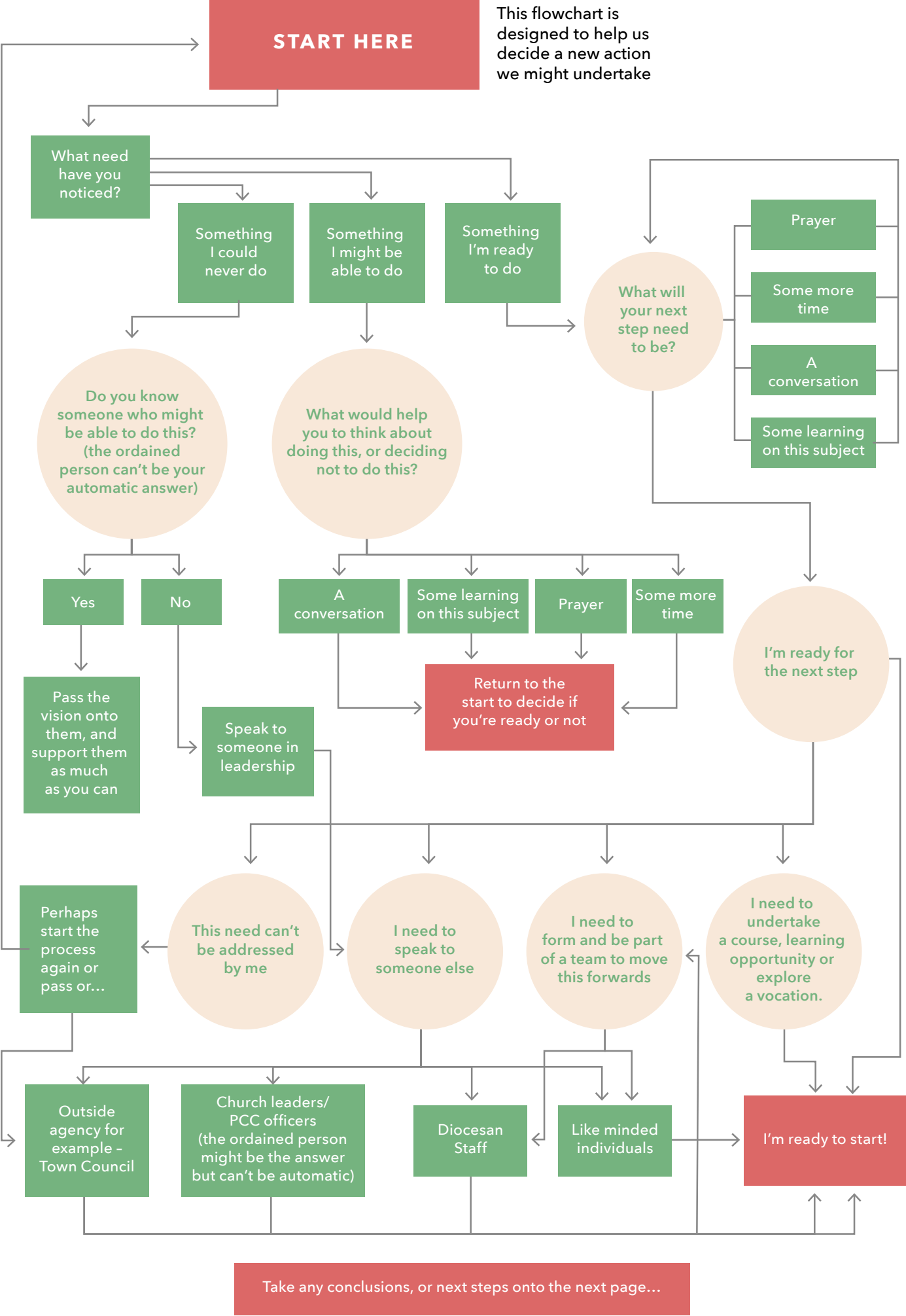


You might not know the next step to take. You might be unsure of whether you want to take any steps at all. You may have decided that you're quite happy in your current situation. All of these things are understandable. Even if you're entirely convinced about the next move you make, it might be helpful to try and explore the following flow chart. Have a thought in mind, or if you don't have any thoughts, pick one that seems plausible from the previous list.

The flowchart should provide a framework to help your thought process. Start where it says 'start here' in the red box at the top, and work your way down, with an idea in mind.

You may have one idea, twenty ideas, or just a vague thought about something. Give this a try as many times as is helpful, or come back to it over time. The boxes to fill in afterwards might help you to cement some of these thoughts.





I want to focus on this thing	I know what to do next	I think I'll need the following things



In all of these thoughts, it's really important to remember that small steps can help us move forward as people and disciples who can be part of a changing world. But it's also really important to remember that God works in all the things you do, and so many more things as well. As we take these small steps, let's be reminded that the purpose of all of these choices is kingdom work, which doesn't necessarily mean 'church work' (although it might).

And let's also remember this - the kingdom of heaven will surprise us all - it will surprise the Archbishop of Canterbury as much as it will surprise you. And finally, the kingdom's arrival doesn't depend on your involvement for its success, but its nature requires all people to potentially be part of it. God's love can give life, and change the world, and this is God's hope for each of us, and something we can step into in big ways and small ways. These activities should help to give you an idea of which step to take next, whether small or big.



**The poet, rapper and writer Gil Scott-Heron said this,**  
**"Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something. And if everybody does something, then everything gets done."**

**This time tomorrow:**

With your group, or on your own, take a few minutes to think, or explain where you will be this time tomorrow (or if in 12 or 18 hours if that's more helpful?)

**Consider these things...**

- Who you might see there?
- What you might be doing?
- How you could represent Jesus in that place?
- How you might feel God's presence there?



**In part #3 we have thought about...**

- 1. Growing in our faith**
- 2. Growing the Kingdom of Heaven**



Here's the same prayer,  
that you might like to think about,  
or say again

And in this he showed me something small,  
no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand,  
as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding  
and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that  
it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness  
it would suddenly have fallen into nothing.

And I was answered in my understanding: it lasts and  
always will, because God loves it; and thus everything  
has been through the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three properties.

The first is that God made it,  
the second is that God loves it,  
the third is that God preserves it.

But what did I see in it? It is that God is the  
Creator and the protector and the lover. For until I am  
substantially united to him, I can never have perfect rest or  
true happiness, until, that is, I am so attached to him that  
there can be no created thing between my God and me.

Amen

A PRAYER FROM THE WORDS  
OF JULIAN OF NORWICH



# You Are The Body of Christ



Here's a prayer,  
that you might like to think or say:

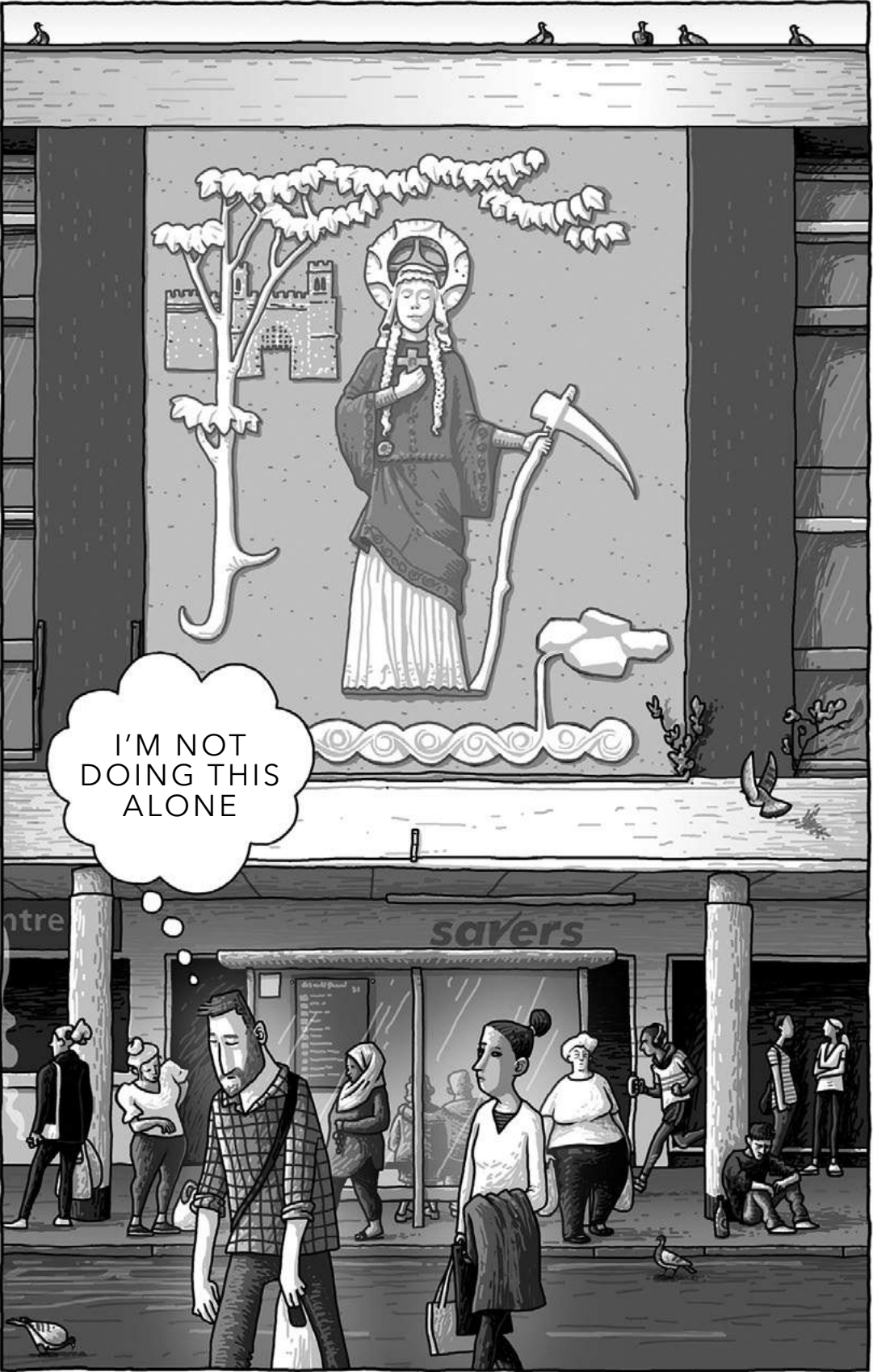
Lord, you have always marked  
the road for the coming day,  
and although it may be hidden,  
help me to believe.

Amen

FROM COMMON PRAYER BY  
JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE  
AND SHANE CLAIBORNE



# PART #4 FOCUSES ON...



KNOWING HOW OUR JOURNEY  
IS GOING

Everything that we have thought about is based on understanding our own perspectives and the perspectives of others to help us understand ourselves as disciples. Through this process, and also through life itself, we're learning to see and feel God's presence in lots of different ways and places.

And in all of this, if we in any way consider ourselves followers of Jesus, that makes us like the disciples talked about in the Bible like Mary, Peter and John. We are disciples like them - sometimes thriving, sometimes struggling, but on this journey nonetheless. And of course, journeys are about taking steps. The steps can be in any direction and the route can change, but the journey continues. God calls us to keep taking those steps. St Paul describes it in his letter to the Christians in Philippi as 'straining toward what is ahead' (Philippians 3:13).



In The Message translation of Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 12), Paul explains it like this: 'Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.'





You may have heard the story of three workers, breaking rocks into pieces. When someone asked what they were doing, the first answered, "Making little rocks out of big ones." The second replied, "Making a living." And the third said, "Building a cathedral."

What do you do, day to day? Where do you shop? Who are your friends? What do you work at? What things are you doing there (and in what ways) that you could imagine Jesus asking his disciples to do?

Or

How would you describe what you're doing

- a) when fulfilling employment/volunteering work
- b) when you're at home
- c) when you're involved in church activities?

Talk to someone about this. Why do you think you feel like this? Do you like it? Love it? Hate it?



In part #3, you were encouraged to think about the next step you might take. Perhaps the beginning of a journey, or perhaps a new or revisited step. If you have had some time between that thought process and now, there will be some value in considering those ideas again.

But maybe you're already doing them? Is there someone who you speak to, who no-one else does? Or a way you've developed of not getting cross when things go wrong?

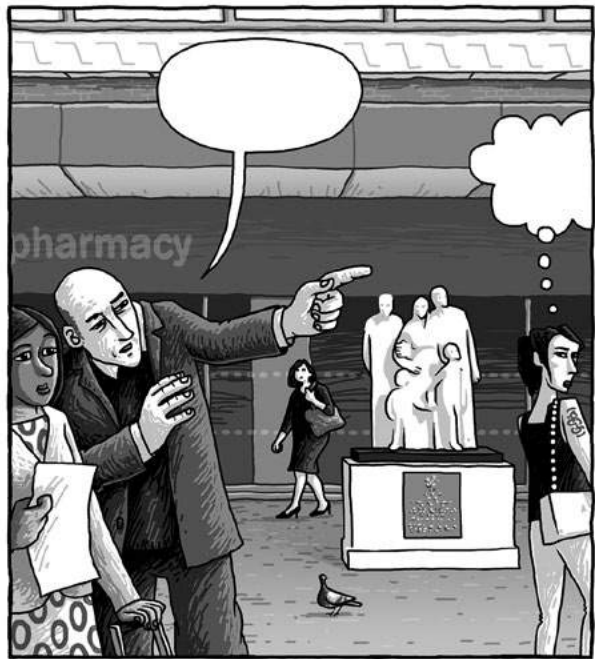
**Task:**

Maybe these are new ideas, or you need reminding - talk yourself or your friends through the conclusions or new realisations you are reaching.

How do you feel about these potential actions?  
Do they feel likely or unlikely?  
Is there anything you could do to improve their chances of happening?



While you’ve been having these thoughts, other people are thinking about this question too. When we’ve thought about perspective, it’s reminded us of being part of something bigger. The letters (known as Epistles) that make up a large part of the New Testament think about the idea of being part of a connected group in lots of different ways. One of the big ideas that appears is the Christian community (which we call the church) being seen as a connected thing that works together in a unique way. This group is often referred to as ‘the body of Christ’, particularly by Paul, one of the writers of the New Testament.



In Paul’s first letter to the Christians in Corinth, Greece, he uses this description: ‘Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many’. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

- What are your skills? What are you good at?
- Who do you know who does other things that help?

The Bible lists some different roles that each person might have – but it is worth thinking about these in more modern ways.



**Your part of this body might be**

- Calmness,
- Giving good advice,
- Understanding things and being able to explain them,
- Being trustworthy,
- Helping people who need it,
- Doing amazing things,
- Saying things that need to be said,
- Offering friendship.

You have qualities and gifts that will help to build the kingdom. You can’t do it all, because you were never supposed to.

**Who has these qualities that you don’t have?**

To be a bit modern briefly, the whole thing was supposed to be built on the concept of teams, because the three parts of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) models that very idea. You’re not expected to do it on your own, but neither are you supposed to leave it to others to do.



**Task: think or talk about these questions...**

- **Where do you see yourself in the body of Christ?**
- **How close are you to it?**
- **How much a part of it do you feel?**
- **What might help you to be convinced of your place?**

Jesus once said this to his disciples, and a lot of other people at the same time too: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15)



**Try and imagine driving across Exmoor on a winter's night. It's cold, but the sky's clear. You're at the top of one of those slopes, looking down over Georham, or Saunton. And there are two kinds of light. There are the individual lights - someone's porch light presumably on the front of a fairly remote farmhouse or cottage. And then there are the whole areas that glow; you can't differentiate between individual houses, there's just a joined up collection of lights.**

You might even turn around, and see that there's a whole lit up area of sky, in the direction where you know Barnstaple to be. It's a whole town that can't be hidden, because of all the light it produces.

This is how Jesus imagines us to be - as Christians on our own, we still produce light which is valuable to those around us. But as a group, the light we produce is so much more significant. It's when we exist together with a shared idea of how to live that what we do can't be hidden, and has value to everyone around.



Think about this...  
Where will God be using you this time tomorrow?  
Next week?  
Next year?



Over the past four sessions, do you feel that anything has become any clearer?  
  
Do you know what step you might take next?



If we remember that those earliest disciples didn't live as individuals, but became part of a community. We can follow this idea, and not be individuals, but be part of something bigger. Be encouraged that so many millions of people have trodden this path before, and while you are unique, the obstacles have been the same for so many people. Those people have done things, struggled with things, and you are just the same.

When you read and think and talk and act, God goes with you. This occurs through the Holy Spirit. It's a challenging idea to comprehend, but remember, as Paul said to the church in Rome - 'the Spirit of God lives in you' (Romans 8:9). You're not making this journey alone, but are part of a worldwide community, and even more so, are encouraged along the way by God himself.

His Spirit is with us.

Here's the same prayer,  
that you might like to think about,  
or say again

Lord, you have always marked  
the road for the coming day,  
and although it may be hidden,  
help me to believe.

Amen

FROM COMMON PRAYER BY  
JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE  
AND SHANE CLAIBORNE



All illustrations by Si Smith  
Graphic design by Tom Cross  
Text by Jon Curtis

Common Prayer written by Shane Claiborne and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove,  
published by Zondervan.

Bible translations from the New International Version, and The Message.

Illustration locations: Sidwell St - Exeter, two houses on the main road down into Dartmouth, the sea wall in Brixham, Paignton beach, a roundabout on the outskirts of Plymouth, a bridge in Postbridge, the harbour in Brixham, Plymouth city centre, Brixham sea wall, Totnes, Bideford, Fore Street - Exeter, waterfront steps in Dartmouth, Exeter city centre, Salcombe, Dartmouth, some flats in Exeter, the road out of Dartmouth, Dartmoor again, Plymouth city centre, down near the indoor market, Blackpool Sands, a disused old cinema on the edge of Plymouth city centre, a beach just south of Blackpool Sands, the sundial fountain in Plymouth, Woolworths in Seaton, Lundy, Barricane beach, somewhere on the A385 between Exeter and Paignton, a rural bus stop, Woodville, the Britannia pub, Plymouth train station, Barnstaple.



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DIOCESE  
OF EXETER  
THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
IN DEVON



pray



grow



serve  
with joy