

# Makes You Wonder 2

Conversations about

# Your Story



*Help a friend see the spiritual  
stuff*

by Ian Robinson

*MYW2: Your Story* is dedicated to

**Peter and Sue Kaldor**

friends, supporters,  
adventurers; generous, creative,  
compassionate leaders



## MYW2: YOUR STORY

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Where can we see God at work in others' lives? How can we interpret that to help them to see how BIG God is? What is happening around them that bears the fingerprints of God? Some voices speak of a pattern or purpose emerging in their life. They have a sneaking suspicion that they are here for a reason. For many people, it is more than a suspicion. They have been met by a happening from heaven, called an "epiphany" or possibly "a wakeup call". But what is real here? Some epiphanies may be just an overheated imagination, some of it superstitious, without a shred of evidence. Can we understand these spiritual experiences?

In this second series of *Makes You Wonder*, we will look away from church, philosophy and theology in order to focus on the everyday world around us. We will look at some of the experiences that we share with other humans, the common ground in experience though a Christian may hold a different view about them. Before we rush to state our view, however, we need to stop and listen, and engage in the experience. What are the clues to show that God has been there? What might it mean as we journey in our life? We will also face a few influences that can mislead us.

## *MAKES YOU WONDER* EXERCISES HELP YOU TO

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- Find your own voice in sharing the faith that you have now, with the people you live and work with
- Develop confidence in the power of your Christian self
- Realise afresh how great a gospel you have received
- Find fresh and biblical ways to share this realisation in small steps with those who have no church background.

The first four books include about sixty exercises that can be used in a small group in the order given, in a class as a curriculum, in church as a series of sermons or in a training seminar. You can also do the exercises individually as 'stand alone' exercises.

## TOPICS IN MAKES YOU WONDER 2:

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In each topic, leader's notes are written out in full, followed by a shorter version (they begin with the title Handout MYW2) which you may give as a handout to participants. You could do this before, during, or after each session – your choice.

## DOWNLOAD THE MYW APP.

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AVAILABLE ON IPHONE AND ANDROID

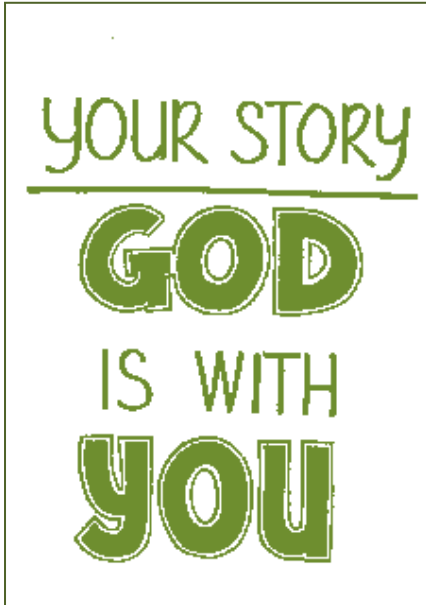


# 1. GOD IS WITH YOU

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## GOAL

To show how, in people's life-stories, there are signs of God's presence and His grace.



## INTRODUCTION

God is caring for people, and calling for people to connect. His rain falls on the just and the unjust alike (Jas 1:17, Matt 5.45). Being made in God's image, all people experience much of His grace, but often unknowingly. This exercise increases awareness of this Grace.

## KEY QUESTION EXERCISE:

### STEP ONE THINK

What was your earliest awareness of God in your life?

Let us begin by looking into our own experience. Think of the time before you were an adult or committed Christian. (A childhood faith is tested by life.)

### STEP TWO SMALL GROUP

Groups of three, talk for one minute each, then talk it over together for a few minutes. Decide what you will share with the whole group.

## OTHER QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER

What was the 'hook' in the gospel that drew you to search?

What has been one of the most awesome moments in your life?

When are you most aware that you are here on earth for a purpose?

What gives you hope to go on living?

Have you ever had an inexplicable or powerful spiritual experience? What was it?

*(Leader will tell their own story first, by way of example.)*



### STEP THREE ALL TOGETHER

List on the board the "hooks" in everyone's stories. Sometimes one of the "other questions to go deeper" also needs to be asked, to produce a wider range of responses.

## GOD'S PRESENCE LIST

*Categorise the answers onto the whiteboard under these categories:*

- **God** acting directly
- **Nature** speaking of a Creator.
- Particular **circumstances** pushed a person to seek
- Other **persons** have influenced us

## DISCUSSION

(a) As a Christian, I believe these “experiences” are God’s invitations to know him better. Like a knock on the door that can be opened, a phone ringing that can be answered, a journey whose first step can be taken. What metaphor would you use?

(b) Some evil is “awesome” also, that is why most people can’t scream when a burglar comes in. That is why evil characters in fiction are often more “interesting” than good ones. “Dread” is the opposite word to “joy” in the literature.

(c) Our findings in this exercise are an expression of the Christian doctrines of Creation and the work of the Holy Spirit in PREVENIENT GRACE or COMMON GRACE or GENERAL REVELATION (as distinct from SAVING GRACE or SPECIAL REVELATION). If these terms mean nothing you may be glad to read up on them first.

(d) How difficult was it for you to talk about these things? Is it because we are shy or because these things are precious? It is enriching to learn how to be more confident and generous with the meaning in your life by doing more MYW questions – and by getting the YEAR OF WONDER app on your phone.

(e) People appreciate respect and safety, and they like it when we can actually help in interpreting their experiences and we don’t grab at their precious thoughts and pull them apart. How do you ensure this respect is received?

## CONCLUSION

Within our experiences, God has many ways to break into our awareness, but the more they happen the more we simply take them for granted and God ‘disappears’ into the background again.



# HANDOUT MYW2.1

## GOD IS WITH YOU

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### GOAL

To show how, in people's life-story, there are signs of God's presence and His grace.

### INTRODUCTION

God is caring for people, and calling for people to connect. His rain falls on the just and the unjust alike (Jas 1:17, Matt 5:45). Being made in God's image, all people experience much of His grace, but often unknowingly. This exercise increases awareness of this Grace.

**KEY QUESTION:** *What was your earliest awareness of God in your life?*

### OTHER QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER

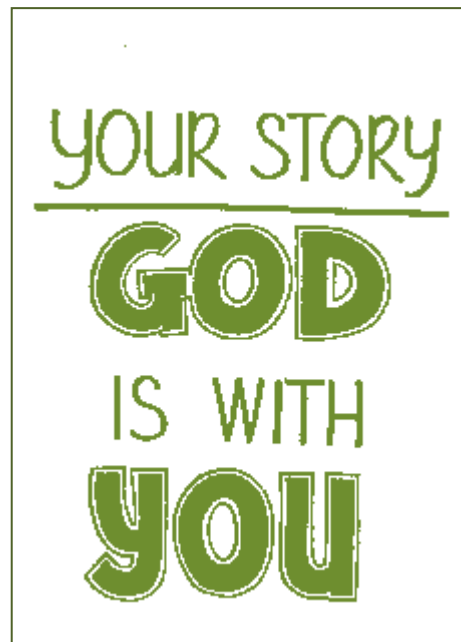
- What was the 'hook' in the gospel that drew you to search?
- What has been one of the most awesome moments in your life?
- When are you most aware that you are here on earth for a purpose?
- What gives you hope to go on living?
- Have you ever had an inexplicable or powerful spiritual experience? What was it?

### GOD'S PRESENCE:

- **God** acting directly
- **Nature** speaking of a Creator
- **Circumstances** pushing a person to seek
- Other **person(s)** influence

### CONCLUSION

Within our experiences, God has many ways to break into our awareness, but we tend to take them for granted.





*This map is for copying to use in Exercise 2 Mapping My Life.*





## 2. MAPPING MY LIFE

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### GOAL

To look back across our years to uncover a pattern of meaning.

### PREPARATION

*Footsteps, maps, pencils, map template. Leader's completed map.*

### INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)

Days pass, years pass, we go through trials and stages. We have a sneaking suspicion that they add up to something. Sometimes we get a glimpse, in a time of **guidance** (someone has 'opened a door' for us), of **provision** ("something always turns up" or "coincidences") or of **redemption** (where bad things have been turned to good).

*Leader tells a personal story of a time when, unsought, some providence happened to them, but it was not recognised at the time.*

### STORY (4 minutes)

1. **Footprints** – We have probably all heard this before. Someone only realized later what God had been up to. Have any of you had this sense about your own life? Bring to mind that part of your life. *A brief pause*
2. **Elijah** I Kings 19.3-12 Elijah gets no great revelation from the sky, yet he understands, when he allows himself to hear God in the stillness, that his life has an emerging pattern to which he had been previously blind.

*Leader now shows their personal version of a completed Life-map and uses it to relate in two minutes an instance of how the "sneaking suspicion" added up at some point in time, from the pattern of things, not just from one instance or event.*

### EXERCISE (about 1 hour)

*Explain the steps for this exercise.*

#### STEP ONE – MAPPING MY LIFE (20 minutes)

Hand out the maps and pencils

Draw a life-line on your map - the wilderness years, the dark valleys, the crowded house, the times when it was like walking through a swamp, and so on. Start with where you feel you are at this point in your life, and then add in one by one any other stages of your life (in no particular order), placing them in geography to illustrate what that time meant for you. Mark the most significant years of grief or glory.

Mark with an arrow, any places where you could say the Spirit of God was a more active part of your life. E.g Discovering the great moments and relationships, life-changing coincidences, discovering a sense of purpose, aware of a hankering after God = a 'sneaking suspicion', blessings amidst sufferings.

Mark with an X, where you felt you had to go it alone.

## STEP TWO    SMALL GROUPS (15 to 20 minutes)

Form pairs or threes. Show each other your life-map, telling one or two stories about what it means.

### DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

Come back to the whole group. Ask: "In one sentence, from this exercise today, what have you noticed about any emerging pattern or purpose in your life? Or of being held or blessed?"

*Leader writes points down to use in a prayer at the conclusion of this exercise.*

### CONCLUSION (2 minutes)

God is in our footsteps, sometimes confusing, sometimes close, and sometimes even appearing to be indifferent. But as we look into the pattern, and as we seek reliable ways of interpreting it, we can grow in clarity and connectedness.

Using the collected sentences, lead the group in a litany, meditation or prayer. You may also want to keep this for the concluding prayer for the whole series of exercises.



# HANDOUT MYW2.2

## MAPPING MY LIFE

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### GOAL

To look back across our years to uncover a pattern of meaning.

### INTRODUCTION

Days pass, years pass, we go through trials and stages. We have a sneaking suspicion that they add up to something. Sometimes we get a glimpse, in a time of guidance (someone has 'opened a door' for us), of provision ("something always turns up" or "coincidences") or of redemption (where bad things have been turned to good). For example: Elijah I Kings 19.3-12

### EXERCISE

- Draw a life-line on your map - the wilderness years, the dark valleys, the crowded house, the times when it was like walking through a swamp, and so on. Start with where you feel you are at this point in your life, and then add in one by one any other stages of your life (in no particular order), placing them in geography to illustrate what that time meant for you. Mark the most significant years of grief or glory.
- Mark with an arrow, any places where you could say the Spirit of God was a more active part of your life. E.g Discovering the great moments and relationships, life-changing coincidences, discovering a sense of purpose, aware of a hankering after God = A 'sneaking suspicion', Blessings amidst sufferings.
- Mark with an X, where you felt you had to go it alone?
- Share in a group of three, then one sentence with the whole group.

### CONCLUSION

God is in our footsteps, sometimes confusing, sometimes close, and sometimes even appearing to be indifferent. But as we look into the pattern, and as we seek reliable ways of interpreting it, we can grow in clarity and connectedness.



### 3. HEARING YOU

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#### GOAL

To open up many entry points in people's everyday lives in which one may bear witness.

#### PREPARATION

*Entry points headings written on whiteboard. Copies of MYW2.3: HEARING YOU worksheet.*

This exercise uses a mini case-study approach, not to solve the questions but to open them up. The goal is to explore the entry point, not to find final answers. In its current form it is designed to be used by a group of Christians.

#### INTRODUCTION (20 minutes)

Christians often lament that the bulk of their friends and family are just totally disinterested and comfortably self-sufficient without God. Are there no ways of getting through to their hearts?



This exercise says, "Yes, lots of ways!" But not by wanting to start with the answers, when we haven't actually heard this person's questions yet. We must learn to open things up.

"Entry points" are the times where the heart is open to something new about life. It is when someone's world view and lifestyle may be open for re-consideration. No one is totally closed, because life never stands still. The opportunities are there, probably non verbal, as you listen to people and watch their actions. As a friend, your sincere response especially in the form of an open question, will be appreciated.

It is usually assumed in Christian thinking that to get through to people is to focus on their "needs". You may have heard it said: 'Find a need and fill it.' But this is inadequate in three ways - firstly, because many have no felt needs, secondly, because some people are VERY needy and you are not building them into beautiful

people if all you can do is "meet needs". Thirdly, we do not meet their needs, we only help a little. Behind every need is another need arising. An exclusive focus on 'needs' is very inadequate.

In this exercise we discover four kinds of entry points: the Highs, the Hurts, the Hopes and the History of people. All provide us with ways to "connect" with them, possibly to engage them to go further into discoveries in the gospel. Putting it briefly, here are the four kinds of entry point. *Write each title on the whiteboard as you describe it. The leader can illustrate each one with one brief story.*

## HIGHS – LIFE'S GREAT EXPERIENCES

These are experiences of awe or wonder. We can reframe this as a creator's purpose or design in the world, as the gifts of life. Maybe people have an urge towards thankfulness but do not realize that there is someone to thank. Experiences like this could include childbirth, marriage, being loved or loving, finding deep friendship, the beauty of nature, deep peace and more. Funerals can be more awesome than tragic for some. Our reframing must be affirming and leading. Every experience identified speaks powerfully that there is 'something more' AND that it is within reach of our living space. *Open it up for the group by reframing, with respect, how you see their experience.*

## HURTS - LIFE'S WORST EXPERIENCES & NEEDS

Hurts may be present in one of three kinds. There may be an entry point when they are hurt by disillusionment with their present belief system OR when they identify a cry for help and strength, OR they may **not** be ready for any new perspective or reframing and they just need our help through it all. eg. Release from ongoing problems (drugs, abuse, family situations), near death experiences, loneliness or aloneness due to dislocation, ongoing struggles (eg. unemployment, homelessness, injustices to do with law, poverty), depersonalisation by technology, fears in a world of change and threat, crises (eg. marriage breakup, child's illness). Our reframing must be helpful and attentive without being patronising. The Hurts say powerfully that there are illusions and enemies AND that we need help to see them, to find our purpose and to make it through. We need to engage with the hurt and work within it, not avoid it. See *'The Question of Suffering'* exercise in the MYW Series 4: *THE STORY*. Affirm the love that drives the grief.

## HOPES - LIFE'S NORMAL PURSUITS & DESIRES

Hopes are normal parts of being a person, engaging in the normal run of life, sensing the currents of those normal inner needs and drives. These too are opportunities to show the gospel is full of abundant life, and our reframing must be FOB (fun or beautiful). Examples include: sharing the music and cultural activities that lie close to a person's heart; a desire for a wholesome marriage and family; desires to love and to be loved, to be secure and to be significant (to have a purpose and a role), to be somebody (identity in relationships); a desire for moral guidance or a desire for fun, friendship, exercise or creative expression; a desire to belong in a community, and searching for meaning – even if in cults, occult, new awareness, etc. Our attempts to open up the question and reframe their experience must be both affirming and discerning. Hopes speak powerfully that life is fragile yet it powerfully wants to grow.

## HISTORY - MYTHS, SELF-DESCRIPTION OR CULTURAL OUTLOOKS

The Histories of a people-group are loaded with both openings and blockages to the gospel. They provide powerful images and "loaded words" which point to some heartfelt longings and past struggles. They may equally be more a "dream" than something actually practised. Gospel communication can pick this up, by using these creative images about Jesus or about Christian life.

Because they are specific to a sub-culture examples may apply to some people and not to others. They will open up some, but are possibly even offensive to others. Therefore, use them wisely:

- Listen well first (recall the Bible study from Acts 17 how Paul listened well first and overcame his own offence to become affirmative).
- Because a direct attack will only reinforce defences, use parables, images and indirect stories.

*Some examples of Histories in the Australian context*

- The love of "Mateship" in a society where men are poor at relationships eg. Jesus is your best mate (some Christians are offended by this statement while others find it positively refreshing). Church people are real mates.
- The "Aussie Battler". Jesus was a battler. Christians battle on for love.
- The love of "The Gamble". Australians are the world's top gamblers. Can you win by trusting God? Pascal's Wager: If Christians are right and I reject the gospel, I will lose (by going to hell). If Christians are wrong and I accept the gospel, I have lost nothing in the wager. So I will accept the gospel, because this is the only wager that can win.
- The commitment to "The Investment". Australians have a dream of investing their lives in a home of their own (mortgaged) eg. Invest your life in a secure return.
- The growing focus on Anzac Day = "no greater love." But who was the one who led the way?

## EXERCISE (30 minutes)

The examples above refer to Australian entry points, but are of value to others. Each subculture can name its own examples. Let's do an exercise to achieve that.

Leaders hand out copies of the worksheet "MYW2.3: HEARING YOU".

- Explain the worksheet.** Columns I-II Set the Scene. Columns III-IV get us into the heart-situation of people, sensitive to the entry points. Column IV reminds us how to act according to the needs of the **other** person, not out of our own needs. Columns V-VI are practical actions guiding us around from the entry point. Column V asks what we might say and do initially, leading on to column VI. Why think in a 'leading on' way? One quick word or act is not enough. When in column VI we ask what Jesus would say and do, we are saying we would seek to say and do a similar thing. It may be right away, it may be a little later, but we do not want to let the entry point be the end point.
- Walk people through** the first example, gradually asking for more input from them. Then turn it over to them to do the rest.
- Do this exercise in small groups. Start each group with a different case and then ask them to go down the list and cycle through to the top, doing as many examples as possible in thirty minutes. This will mean that, when you come back together for discussion, every case study has received some input. If time is short or the group is small, do it all together, but try to get comments from different people not just the same people.

## TOGETHER FOR DISCUSSION

Run quickly through each case. Invite all who have a thought to add it in, case by case, firstly from group discussion then any others. They have already felt the weight of each situation in small groups, therefore, the discussion now focusses on opening up more ideas. If they have not been in small groups, but you are doing this in one full group, go more slowly so that they feel the weight of the situation at heart-level, and appreciate their own vulnerability.

## CONCLUSION

We have found a pathway into a wide range of entry points, if we are really hearing what our acquaintances are saying.

## *NOTES ABOUT THIS EXERCISE*

- Acknowledgment: this exercise is heavily adapted with permission from an excellent publication by Scripture Union "Care to Say Something/Something to Say". Its particular strengths lay in the self-awareness that is encountered and the way it moves beyond first-thoughts and quick words.
- Most people respond readily to this "mini-case-study" approach. They must be kept, however, to the task of evangelism, rather than just giving comfort or just being critical. Entry points must not be end points. Still others avoid responding to any of it. Invite them personally to provide a response.
- These are terribly brief examples. Everyone therefore imagines each case differently, so there are limits on how far you can go towards 'the right answer'. This does not matter - emphasise that each person needs to find what they would do or say, and that the sharing of ideas here and now will raise their capacity for a range of responses that will suit their situation.
- It can take an hour or more to work through the whole sheet. Some don't like some of the examples so ask them to provide some more. This exercise can be extended indefinitely by using their own examples. Ask small groups to bring a situation or a question from their living week and work it through.
- Some people like to develop this into a role play. Some individuals even try to play "the devil's advocate". It is not a good idea in this Workshop to allow either of these. The focus in *MYW* is genuine openness and "having a go". Adopting roles will not help to press home this major goal.

## MYW2.3 HEARING YOU WORKSHEET

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	<b>The situation as it presents</b>	<b>What they said or did</b>	<b>What does this show is going on at their heart?</b>	<b>How does this make you vulnerable?</b>	<b>What could you say or do first?</b>	<b>What would Jesus say or do?</b>
HIGHS	Young couple with first baby	"Isn't it magic!"	Wonder at this gift	Magic? Childless? Not celebratory?	What a gift! A gift/card with a blessing	He welcomed them and blessed them
HURTS	Man recently became single again	She just walked out, no reasons, selfish #@*.	Anger, grief, puzzled	Don't like anger? Too private? You are on her side?		
HOPES	Woman has received a big promotion	'You can reach any goal if you want it enough'	Excited and relieved to reach her goal			
HISTORY	Family has just bought their first home.	'It's like a dream. We own our own home.'				
HIGHS	Young person just back from trip to India	'At the temple I just started crying. It was wonderful.'				
HURTS	Twenty-something depressed & frustrated.	'I can't see any change in me or anyone else around this'				
HOPES	55 year old man	I don't think I have any real friends.				
HISTORY	Growing attendance s at Anzac Day	'This battle shaped our identity as a people.'				





# HANDOUT MYW2.3

## HEARING YOU

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### GOAL

To open up the many entry points in people's everyday lives to enable one to bear witness.

### INTRODUCTION

Christians often lament that the bulk of their friends and family are totally disinterested in faith and comfortably self-sufficient without God. Are there no ways of getting through to their hearts?

### ENTRY POINTS

This exercise says, "Yes, lots of ways!" But not by wanting to start with the answers, when we haven't actually heard this person's questions yet. We must learn to open things up. Entry points are the times where the heart is open to something new about life. It is when someone's world view and lifestyle may be open for re-consideration. No one is totally closed, because life never



stands still. The opportunities are there, although possibly non-verbal, as you listen to people and watch their actions. As a friend, your sincere response, especially in the form of an open question, will be appreciated.

It is often assumed in Christian thinking that to get through to people is to focus on their "needs". You may have heard it said: 'Find a need and fill it.' But this is inadequate in three ways: firstly, because many have no felt needs; secondly, because some people are VERY needy and you are not building them into beautiful people if all you can do is "meet needs;" and thirdly, we cannot meet all their needs, we can only help a little. Behind every need is another need arising.

In this exercise we discover four kinds of entry points: Highs, Hurts, Hopes and History. These can provide ways to "connect" with people, and possibly to engage them to go further into discoveries in the gospel.

### HIGHS – Life's Great Experiences

Experiences of awe or wonder. We can reframe this as a creator's purpose or design in the world, as the gifts of life. Eg childbirth, marriage, love, friendship, the beauty of nature, deep peace, etc.. Funerals can be more awesome than tragic for some. Our reframing must be affirming and leading. There is 'something more' AND it is within reach of our living space.

## HURTS - Life's Worst Experiences and Needs

Their hurt may be disillusionment OR it may be a new cry for help OR they just need OUR help now. Our reframing must be helpful and attentive without being patronising. We need to engage with the hurt and work within it, not avoid it. Affirm the love that drives the grief.

## HOPES - Life's Normal Pursuits and Desires

Hopes are normal parts of being a person, engaging in the normal run of life, its potential and resilience, sensing the currents of those normal inner needs and drives. The gospel is full of abundant life, and our reframing must be FOB (fun or beautiful) eg. Sharing the music and cultural activities that lie close to a person's heart; desiring a wholesome marriage and family; recognising the desire to love and be loved, to be secure, to be significant (having a purpose or role), to be somebody (having identity in relationships); desire for moral guidance, for fun, friendship or just exercise; desire for creative expression; desire to belong in a community or a search for meaning – even if in cults, occult, new awareness, etc. Our attempts to open up the question and reframe their experience must be both affirming and discerning. HOPES speak powerfully that life is fragile yet it powerfully wants to grow.

## HISTORY - the Myths, Self-description or Cultural Outlooks

The Histories of a people-group are loaded with both openings and blockages to the gospel. They provide powerful images and "loaded words" which point to some heartfelt longings and past struggles. They can be used to produce creative images about Jesus or about Christian life.

Because they are specific to a sub-culture they apply to some people and not to others. Because a direct attack will only reinforce defences, use parables, images and indirect stories.

Some Australian examples of Histories:

Mateship	Aussie Battler	Gambling
The Investment	Anzac Day	The Beach/Bush

## CONCLUSION

We have found a wide range of entry points, if we are really hearing what our acquaintances are saying.



## 4. THE SMELL OF GOD

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### GOAL

To identify, out of people's "great moments," the qualities of God's presence in their lives.

**PREPARATION:** *Make sure you have checked whether anyone has allergies to particular scents. Scents in bottles or on cards, PowerPoint of poems in Steps one and two, whiteboard.*

### INTRODUCTION (6 minutes)

*Have several scents in small bottles or on cards, and get three people to guess the aromas.*

Have you ever noticed the scent of a person who comes up behind you in a queue?

I love those supermarket corners where they give you a taste of the new foods.

This session is a taste and smell exercise of a different kind. It focuses on those experiences that go beyond rational words and hence into the spiritual realm. These are the "Scent" of God.



### STEP ONE READ

#### *The Wonder of it all*

Do you ever wonder, at the wonder of it all?

Do you ever stand in awe of the tiniest things and how perfectly they work together?

Do you ever stop to think about all the possibilities and how even though they have no limit they grow in number with every minute?

Do you ever wonder when the leaves flutter down in autumn at the incomprehensible power of life that brings them back in spring?

Do you watch the waves roll in and then look out far beyond them where the water seems to touch the sky and realise that the vast expanse before your eyes is only a small little corner of all there really is?

And do you comprehend that all there really is, as unimaginably grand as it may seem, is only a smaller corner still of all that there can be?

Do you ever wonder how love can stay alive past every pleasure and every pain and even when there can be no hope there is more than ever?

Do you ever struggle to lift a heavy rock and wonder how a massive mountain can rise thousands of feet above the plain without even trying?

Do you ever realise that no matter how much you may know, no matter how many wonders you may have experienced, there will always, always be more?

Do you ever wonder why it is you wonder and why you know what beauty is even though you can't define it?

Do you ever wonder who is doing the wondering, who is looking out through your eyes and feeling completely at home with the wonder of it all?

Whatever you believe, whatever you profess, whatever you doubt or fear or hope for, there are some things your heart cannot deny when you let go and let yourself know the wonder of it all.

Ralph S. Marston, Jr.      <http://wonderofitall.com>      [www.greatday.com/wonder](http://www.greatday.com/wonder)

## STEP TWO      DISCUSS:

How does this poem's oft-stated 'incomprehensible' way of wonder gel with the very common sense that only 'natural' or 'realistic' or even scientific thinking can explain the truth of things? Are the two ways opposite? Compare your answer with that of the poet and wilderness campaigner Judith Wright below.

### FIVE SENSES

Now my five senses  
gather into a meaning  
all acts, all presences;  
and as a lily gathers  
the elements together,  
in me this dark and shining,  
that stillness and that moving,  
these shapes that spring from nothing,  
become a rhythm that dances,  
a pure design.

While I'm in my five senses  
they send me spinning  
all sounds and silences,  
all shape and colour  
as thread for that weaver,  
whose web within me growing  
follows beyond my knowing  
some pattern sprung from nothing-  
a rhythm that dances  
and is not mine.

*Judith Wright 1915-2000*

## STEP THREE:      STORY

Tell a particular example of Wonder at Work such as: "Whale" (15 minutes) OR *Leader tells a story of their own (5 minutes)*

## STEP FOUR      BEYOND WORDS (20 minutes)

Form into small groups of three persons, NOT with the person you woke up with this morning. Spend a little time thinking about an experience similar to what is described in the last texts. That is, the story of an experience in the natural environment or a birth/death experience, when it was so wonderful you found yourself running out of words, either by choice (silence was the right response) or just because you were awestruck.

Now tell each other the story of the experience. Don't just describe the event, tell the story how it happened. Walk through it. What was it like to be there?

## HELP FOR WALKING THROUGH A STORY

- When and where were you?
- Find the right words not the easy words to describe it
- How were you feeling before this unusual event happened?
- Tell how the event unfolded. Not just the facts but the flavour of the experience.
- When it was finished, how would you describe what the experience gave you?

*Take as much time as you can to do this. 5 minutes each is good.*

## FEEDBACK (10 minutes)

Let's try to understand this experience a little better. If you COULD put a word to that experience, what would that word be. It might sound cheesy or poetic, no holds barred.

*Write them up. People may feel nervous, so it is important to show respect and respond to the reverence of this sharing.*

## CONCLUSION (2 minutes)

These words are the sort of words used in the Bible to describe God. Remembering that God is actually more than nature, I suggest that what you have been experiencing is what it is to experience God. It's "the smell of God" – his character "up close and personal" to you. This exercise shows that you already have a very ready spiritual sensitivity. These experiences are God's business cards, or party invitations. They are like cooking smells from the kitchen when you come on from the cold - God's "welcome home."

Read Romans 1:19-20 or Psalm 148

## CLOSING MEDITATION

*Burn incense or spray perfume around the room.*

Play a song (your choice) that suits the theme, or any music that says: The Holy Bible says, "O taste and see that the Lord is Good."



# HANDOUT MYW2.4

## THE SMELL OF GOD

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### GOAL:

To identify, from people's "great moments", qualities of God's presence.

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed the scent of a person who comes up behind you in a queue? I love those supermarket corners where they give you a taste of the new foods.

This session is a scent exercise of a different kind. It focuses on those experiences that go beyond rational words and hence into the spiritual realm. These are the smell of God.

### STEP ONE READ

#### "The Wonder of it all"

Do you ever wonder, at the wonder of it all?

Do you ever stand in awe of the tiniest things and how perfectly they work together?

Do you ever stop to think about all the possibilities and how even though they have no limit they grow in number with every minute?

Do you ever wonder when the leaves flutter down in autumn at the incomprehensible power of life that brings them back in spring?

Do you watch the waves roll in and then look out far beyond them where the water seems to touch the sky and realise that the vast expanse before your eyes is only a small little corner of all there really is?

And do you comprehend that all there really is, as unimaginably grand as it may seem, is only a smaller corner still of all that there can be?

Do you ever wonder how love can stay alive past every pleasure and every pain and even when there can be no hope there is more than ever?

Do you ever struggle to lift a heavy rock and wonder how a massive mountain can rise thousands of feet above the plain without even trying?

Do you ever realise that no matter how much you may know, no matter how many wonders you may have experienced, there will always, always be more?

Do you ever wonder why it is you wonder and why you know what beauty is even though you can't define it?

Do you ever wonder who is doing the wondering, who is looking out through your eyes and feeling completely at home with the wonder of it all?

Whatever you believe, whatever you profess, whatever you doubt or fear or hope for, there are some things your heart cannot deny when you let go and let yourself know the wonder of it all.



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<http://wonderofitall.com> [www.greatday.com/wonder](http://www.greatday.com/wonder)

## STEP TWO DISCUSS

How does wonder gel with scientific comprehension?

### **“Five Senses”**

Now my five senses  
gather into a meaning  
all acts, all presences;  
and as a lily gathers  
the elements together,  
in me this dark and shining,  
that stillness and that moving,  
these shapes that spring from nothing,  
become a rhythm that dances,  
a pure design.

While I'm in my five senses  
they send me spinning  
all sounds and silences,  
all shape and colour  
as thread for that weaver,  
whose web within me growing  
follows beyond my knowing  
some pattern sprung from nothing-  
a rhythm that dances  
and is not mine.

*Judith Wright 1915-2000*

## EXERCISE – BEYOND WORDS

An experience in the natural environment or a birth/death experience, when it was so wonderful you found yourself running beyond words - tell the story.

## HELP FOR WALKING THROUGH YOUR STORY

- When and where were you?
- Find the right words not the easy words to describe it
- How were you feeling before this unusual event happened?
- Tell how the event unfolded. Not just the facts but the flavours.
- When it was finished, how would you describe what the experience gave you?

## CONCLUSION

These words are the sort of words used in the Bible to describe God. It's "the smell of God" – his character "up close and personal" to you. This exercise shows that you already have a very ready spiritual sensitivity. These experiences are God's business cards, or party invitations. God's 'welcome home'.





## 5. IMAGO

### GOAL

To discover that, because of the conflicted nature of human beings, we need a spiritual community



### PREPARATION:

*Select and print news stories and/or photos in sufficient quantities for distribution to everyone. Need to keep everyone's attention! With a small group, just ask them to recall the week's news stories.*

### INTRODUCTION

The news carries disasters and rescues, tragedies and triumphs, criminals and heroes. What does it mean?

Some think humans are terrible; others think we are just all wonderful - "What is humanity that thou art mindful of us?" Psalm 8

### EXERCISE: STEP ONE STORY

*Leader uses one newspaper story (not on their sheets) of people doing inspiring stuff, describe your feelings about it, AND point out that it illustrates people at their best and at their worst.*

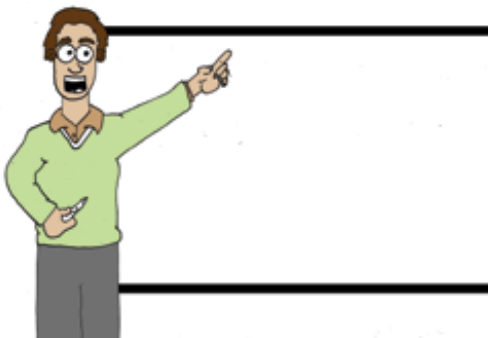
### STEP TWO EXERCISE

In groups of four, look at the (distributed) print media. Find public stories which illustrate:

the best in people – say why you chose it AND

the worst in people – say why you chose it.

Note: Often an example of both can be found in the same story.



### STEP THREE FEEDBACK

Find one or two words only to describe people at their best and one or two words that describe people at their worst. We will make two lists and discuss them.

*Write up two lists as groups feed back.*



## STEP FOUR DISCUSSION

- a. Is it possible for us to refine these two lists even further? Can you find a summary word or two for each list? *Don't worry if it can't be agreed upon – the effort gets us closer. THEN...*

- b. *Look at the 'best' list summary words* - When you are at your best, is this you? *Most can say yes.* SO, your character and God's and the best in humanity are **not far apart**. It is what the Bible calls "made in His image" = imago dei.

*Look at the 'worst' list summary words.* When you are at your worst, have you ever been like this? *Most say yes to this too.* It is what the Bible calls "sin". It looks as though the same drivers are in us that are in them.

- c. So, would you disagree with this statement: Each of us is a microcosm of all the great conflicts 'out there'? *Discuss*

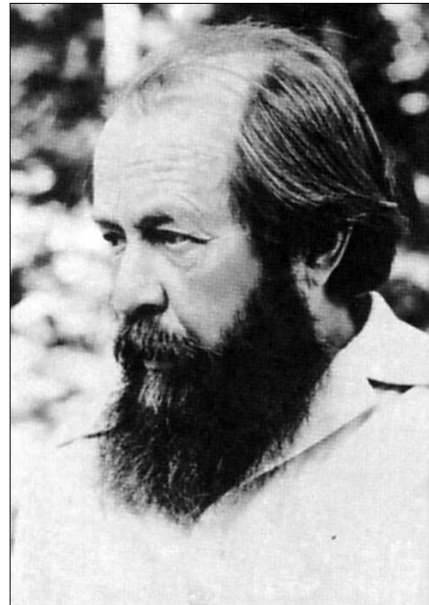
How is this analysis news to you?

## CONCLUSION

We are conflicted creatures.

*If only there were evil people insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them, but the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?*

Alexandr Solzhynitsen  
Russian Nobel Prize winner



The conflicts are not all 'out there' in the big issues for someone else to fix. We are the conflicted nature of reality. We are the problem and we are the answer.

Story: A child said to his grandfather: Pop, I try to be good but sometimes I feel like there are two dogs fighting with each other in my heart. One is good and one is bad. Which one will win?

Grandpa said: Which one are you feeding?

*This is why we need to be part of a spiritual community.*



# HANDOUT MYW2.5 IMAGO

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## GOAL

To discover that, because of the conflicted nature of human beings, we need a spiritual community

## INTRODUCTION

The news carries disasters and rescues, tragedies and triumphs, criminals and heroes. What does it mean?

Some think humans are terrible; others think we are just all wonderful: “What is humanity that thou art mindful of us?” (Psalm 8). What do you think?

## EXERCISE

In groups of four, look at the print media provided. Find public stories which illustrate:  
the best in people – say why you chose it AND

the worst in people – say why you chose it.

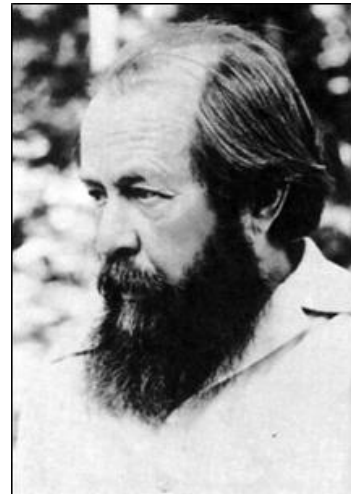
Note: Often an example of both can be found in the same story.

## SOURCES

### QUOTE

*If only there were evil people insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them, but the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?*

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn  
Cold War Russian Nobel Prize winner



### STORY

A child said to his grandfather: Pop, I try to be good but sometimes I feel like there are two dogs fighting with each other in my heart. One is good and one is bad. Which one will win? Grandpa said: Which one are you feeding?

## CONCLUSION

We are conflicted creatures.



## 6. STAND STILL

---

### GOAL

Establish the way to “pay attention.”

### PREPARATION

*White board and markers. Have a copy of the song “God is watching us” to play. Meet in a location near somewhere natural. Timer. Words and music of “For you deep stillness” by Robin Mann and Julie Perrin for conclusion.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is not just in the high points of life where the Great Spirit can be found. There is a lot of the Spirit about the normal everyday - if you can pay attention. City life teaches us to be distracted and to NOT pay attention, so we have much to learn. Let’s do some learning right now.

### EXERCISE: STEP ONE SILENCE

Let’s begin with 30 seconds of silence. Eyes closed so we can get in touch with our hearts. Listen to your heart. Breathe.

*After thirty seconds say ‘well done’*

### STEP TWO STORY

1. Play the song: “God is watching us (from a distance)” and discuss its merit briefly. Is God in the distance, or is God near?
2. Here is an old biblical story of someone who was near to God unawares. Jacob is on the run, and stays overnight at Bethel in Genesis 28:10-17. In verse 16 he says: “God is in this place and I never knew it”. Let’s repeat that, as many as wish to, together: “God is in this place and I never knew it”

### STEP THREE ACTIVITY

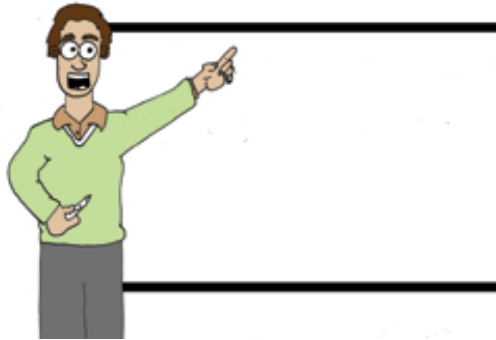
Go outside now and stand still and completely quiet for two full minutes and just look at things. I will have a question to ask when you get back. I will tell you when two minutes is up.

Don’t look at your watch. Don’t talk. No phones, please. No signals to distract each other. No giggles, just eyes wide open for two minutes.



*If you as the leader need to REALLY unsettle people in order to bring them to attention, say:  
"Take off your watch. Turn off your phone."*

*Leader notes the time and tells people when 2 minutes has ended. (NB: It can take 10 minutes to get people outside then back inside).*



#### STEP FOUR KEY QUESTION

*All ages from 3 to 103 can do this. When they return say: Here is my question: When you were standing still out there, what if anything reminded you of God, and why?*

*Make a list to use as a prayer later.*

#### DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

1. Were you surprised at how easily it flows and how much there is? *SO ask: how are you feeling about this exercise so far?*
2. *Re-title the list "When we come to attention we see..." Invite any who wish to read the list as a litany and ask how they feel after saying it? This consolidates the experience.*
3. What do you think would happen to you as a person if you stopped with that degree of attention more often? If you are willing, that's your homework during this course! You can gradually increase the time.
4. Why is it difficult to make the time to pay attention? What are some external reasons? What are some internal reasons? For yourself, what happens on the inside when the activity and noise on the outside stops? NB: We will come across this "noise factor" many times on this course, in different forms.
5. *Where relevant to earlier action above, why was it so hard to be asked to take off your watch and turn off your phone?*

#### CONCLUSION

SO, even though the weather and the bugs can give us diseases (nature is not perfect), there ARE many varied and easily accessible reminders of God in nature. His spirit is NOT "from a distance watching us" but close in. We don't see that because we "switch it off."

To conclude play "For you, deep stillness" by Robin Mann and Julie Perrin.



# HANDOUT MYW2.6

## STAND STILL

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### GOAL

To learn how better to “pay attention”.

### INTRODUCTION

It is not just in the high points of life where the Great Spirit can be found. There is a lot of the Spirit about the normal everyday - if you can pay attention. City life teaches us to be distracted and to NOT pay attention, so we have much to learn.

### EXERCISE: STORY

- Genesis 28:10-17 “God is in this place and I never knew it”

### DISCUSSION

- Were you surprised at how easily it flows and how much there is?
- What do you think would happen to you as a person if you stopped with that degree of attention more often? If you are willing, that’s your homework during this course! You can gradually increase the time.
- Why is it difficult to make the time to pay attention? What are some external reasons? What are some internal reasons? For yourself, what happens on the inside when the activity and noise on the outside stops? NB: We will come across this “noise factor” many times on this course, in different forms.

### CONCLUSION

Even though the weather and the bugs can give us diseases, (nature is not perfect), there ARE many varied and easily accessible reminders of God in nature. His spirit is NOT “from a distance watching us”, but close in. We can practice not ‘switching off.’





## 7. EPIPHANIES

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### GOAL

To show that there are higher-order events happening to many people, kept private for some reason.

**PREPARATION** *Project a copy of Rembrandt's The Return of the Prodigal Son painting, to show while reading the story from Luke 15: 11-32. Have copies of the stories of Bruce Wilson, Patrick White, Martin Luther King, Simone Weil. (See Step Two).*

### INTRODUCTION

Read Luke 15:11-32 about the Prodigal Son. Show Rembrandt's painting of the story. Somehow or other, that prodigal son, when he was in the pig sty, got a "wake up call".

*Leader shares an experience of one of their own 'wake up calls'.*

### STORIES

We don't know how the son got his "wake-up call," but many people today have quite surprising encounters with God, called "epiphanies = enlightenments." Not everyone needs to have an epiphany. But here are some who did: *Have someone read aloud the stories about Bruce Wilson, Patrick White, Martin Luther King, Simone Weil.*

*Leader tells a personal story of an epiphany as a bridge to the next step.*

### KEY QUESTION EXERCISE

#### STEP ONE THINK

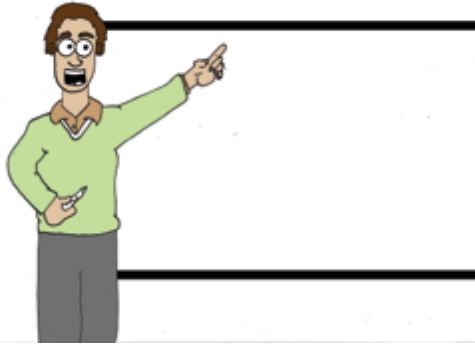
Question: When, if ever, have you had a life-directing "wake up call"? Do you suspect that you may have had an epiphany? Can you name a spiritual experience of some other kind? What did it mean then and what does it mean now?

#### STEP TWO GROUP

In a group of three or four, take turns to share your answers.







### STEP THREE WHOLE GROUP

What do the experiences of epiphany say that **God is (maybe) like?**

*List what is said on the board under the title: "Maybe God is...." It is important for the leader to leave any raw or heretical language there, without comment, correction or ridicule.*

## DISCUSSION

- There may be a variety of things, even some opposites.
- This exercise is not about finding "laws for all time", but about practising being personally attentive to the intimations of God, to learn to interpret God's signposts, question marks, business cards, or invitations to dinner.
- Let each person's observation, even if you don't agree with their wording, be a provocation to look at things from another angle.
- The critical issue is whether or not we come to attention. If we do, and if we become open to more, the Bible is a resource that can enlarge our hearts and sharpen our discernment.

## CONCLUDING MEDITATION

*Change the title to: "God, around here, we wonder if you are..."*

Invite people to re-read what is written as a litany together. Begin and end with a brief pause.



# HANDOUT MYW 2.7

## EPIPHANIES

---

### GOAL

To show that there are higher-order events happening to many people, kept private for some reason.

### INTRODUCTION

Luke 15:11-32 - the Prodigal Son in the pig sty got a “wake up call”. We don’t know how he got it, but many people today have quite surprising encounters with God, called “epiphanies” or “enlightenments.” Not everyone needs to have an epiphany. But here are some who did: *Bruce Wilson, Patrick White, Martin Luther King, Simone Weil.*

### KEY QUESTION

When, if ever, have you had a life-directing “wake up call”? Do you suspect that you may have had an epiphany? Can you name a spiritual experience of some other kind? What did it mean then and what does it mean now?

### CONCLUDING MEDITATION







## 8. THE PARENT TRAP

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### GOAL

To free people of one of the main pressures in their spiritual paths: the memory and modelling of parent and authority figures.

### PREPARATION

*Paper and pens or pencils, music for exercise one, hand mirror with verse based on Isaiah 43:4 written on it (see conclusion)*

### INTRODUCTION

Here is an exercise into **two powerful patterns** that impact heavily upon our spirituality. This exercise is about relationships with God, and how relationships with parents and culture affect them.



### PATTERN 1: PARENT IMPRINTS KEY QUESTION

In what ways is your relationship with God like and unlike your relationship with your parent/s?

#### INTRODUCTION

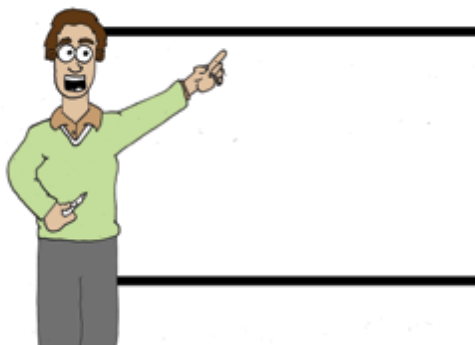
I will soon ask you to take five minutes by yourself to answer one very profound question. Your answer to this question is important to progress on this journey. However, we need to respect those of us for whom it is too personal to talk about in open session. So, I can tell you in advance that we will NOT be discussing this together.

The question is:

'In what ways would you like your relationship with God to be BETTER than your relationship is (or was) with your parent/s?' *Write this on the whiteboard, or have a slide prepared.*

#### STEP ONE STORY

*Leader tells a story about a person's (their own?) confusion that emerges when our relationship with our own parent (whether known or unknown, living or dead) imposes its pattern on how we relate to God as our heavenly Father/Parent.*



#### STEP TWO THINK

*Remind people what the question is. Provide paper and pens or pencils for people who want to write or draw their thoughts. Assure them that they do not have to talk with anyone else about their thoughts, or share their writing or drawing, but if they wish to, they may do so quietly.*

*Play the music for five minutes. During this time, walk around the group and be prepared to help those who can't get started (Ask do you know whether they like you? Do you give them any attention), or who want to talk about issues such as distance, punishment, santa-clausing, pressure, gifts, acceptance?*

### STEP THREE DISCUSSION

Powerful early influences shape the way we think in particular ways that we may only be partially aware of. So even when we think we are open minded, we are taking a particular kind of approach. What would you like to share about this?

*Leader leads the way here into an open but sensitive sharing time. You may need to take a short break afterwards.*

## PATTERN 2: LEARNING IMPRINTS KEY QUESTION

In what ways is your relationship with God and others influenced by your culture?

### INTRODUCTION

This exercise helps you identify the impact of other authority figures. They influence how we do our thinking, but we are often largely unaware of that influence because it has become our 'normal'. Can we reach beyond this to find our own open mind? One way of looking at our culture is to compare our education backgrounds. It is analogous to the Christian life when described as 'discipleship,' a student of God's life.

### STEP ONE EDUCATION IMPRINTS

This brief exercise asks for your perceptions about different kinds of schooling.

Below is a list of different kinds of schools. Half of Australian children go to public schools and half go to the others, or are home schooled.

Government public schools	Catholic schools
Private Protestant schools	Other religious schools
Montessori or Steiner schools	Home schooling
Christian Parent-controlled schools	

Have a brief discussion with the group about which they experienced, and how these different educational systems operate.

*Write answers up on the board without much discussion except to clarify.*

### GOING DEEPER

In your schooling, how much do you consider you reacted against the system that you experienced? How much did you go along with it?

It doesn't matter what we think about the system we experienced; whether we think some are better or worse than others. What matters is that we can identify some differences in values and behaviours that affect how we are today. Each of us is shaped by this system operating on our lives. We contain a mixture of agreements to and reactions against those influences.

### STEP TWO ACTION IMPRINTS

Our post-education life affects us in different ways, especially in how we choose to respond to the things that are going on around us. Let's look at some factors that influence our readiness to take action.

## DISCUSSION

Here is a proposition: By the end of the twentieth century the western world was so utterly technological and consumerist that they could barely work with or do anything about relationships, communities, values or spirituality. As a result, the West decayed in all these areas while the economy 'flourished'. Do you think this is true or false? Do you think this is still true or false?

NOTE: Cultural trends capture us whether we like it or not. It becomes the new normal. Illustrate from the fact that the first Smartphone was released in 2000, and the first iPhone in 2007. How is life different for those who have one and those who don't? What is the norm? Is it different for some people than others?

## EXERCISE CASE STUDY

The government wants to turn your quiet street into a major through-road for ten thousand vehicles per day. It is a favourite place in the area for quiet tree-lined walks. Compare the ways in which (you suspect) people from different professions might respond. Does it make a difference if the street is in another suburb?

## GROUP ACTIVITY

Form groups of four, each with a different occupation from the list below:

Hairdresser	Mechanic	Scientist	Surgeon
Dancer	Musician	Engineer	Builder
Psychologist	GP doctor	Accountant	Real estate agent
CEO	Senator or Councillor		

There won't be right or wrong answers, but differences are likely to be obvious. In the whole group, ask what some of the important differences were. Clarify how the differences are related to the occupation of the person. List them on the whiteboard.

## STEP THREE THINK (5 minutes with music)

Now take some time alone to think about any education or work patterns that affect your relationship with God. Consider: How would you like your relationship with God to be better than that 'allowed by' your past educational/professional influences?

## CONCLUSION

Overall, our parents, our education and our professional lives shape the way we think, the priorities we adopt, the company we keep, the community we identify with and, therefore, our point of view. Each of these influences has its own values and priorities. Each makes a great contribution to our lives. However, each is limited and needs to be rounded out. In particular, our hyper-technological age needs to recover a more spiritual base.

The patterns of our past impact upon the practice of our spirituality. Powerful early influences shape the way we prefer to do our thinking, but we need to be aware of how this can lead us off course or help us stay on course. It also gives us a high calling to influence our children and peers with true Grace.

## MEDITATION (5 minutes)

Play some meditative music while you pass around the hand mirror with these words written on the glass: *You are precious in my eyes, and I love you: God. From Isaiah 43:4.* Tell them to look into it and read the words before passing it on.

*You may want to hand out the resource "The Fatherhood of God and the Heart of Jesus" to be read at home.*



# HANDOUT MYW2.8

## THE PARENT TRAP

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### GOAL

To free people of one of the main pressures in their spiritual paths: the memory and modelling of parent and authority figures.

### INTRODUCTION

This is an exercise examining **two powerful patterns** that impact heavily upon our spirituality, parent imprints and cultural imprints. This exercise is about relationships with God, and how relationships with parents and culture affect them.

### PATTERN 1 PARENTAL IMPRINTS

#### KEY QUESTIONS

- In what ways is your relationship with God like and unlike your relationship with your parent/s?
- In what ways would you like your relationship with God to be BETTER than your relationship is (or was) with your parent/s?

### PATTERN 2 LEARNING IMPRINTS

**EDUCATION IMPRINTS:** This brief exercise asks for your perceptions about schooling, good and bad. In a few words, what is your perception at this point in time of the differences between how these different educational systems operate:

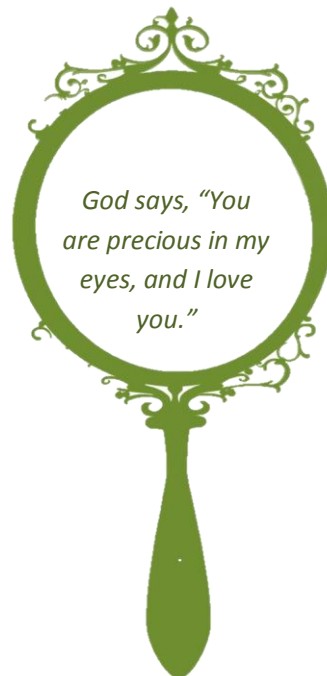
Catholic schools, private schools, government schools, Montessori schools, Steiner schools, Jewish or Islamic schools, Christian Parent-controlled schools, home schooling

**ACTION IMPRINTS:** The government wants to turn a quiet street into a major through-road. Compare the different ways that people from the following professions might respond: hairdresser, mechanic, scientist, surgeon, dancer, musician, engineer, builder, historian, senator, psychologist, GP doctor, accountant or real estate agent.

**KEY QUESTION:** How would you like your relationship with God to be better than that 'allowed by' your past educational/professional influences?

### CONCLUSION

The patterns of our past impact upon the practice of our spirituality. Powerful early influences shape the way we prefer to do our thinking, but we need to be aware of how this can lead us off course, or help us stay on course. It also gives us a high calling to influence our children and peers with true Grace.





## 9. GRUMBLING

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### GOAL

To intentionally focus on the good things by encouraging thanksgiving.

### INTRODUCTION

*This exercise can not be done “cold.” You need to have built a somewhat playful relationship with the group, while maintaining trustworthiness.*

Most of us know how to nit-pick over what is wrong with our day, our life and our families. It is very easy to be negative. It is easy to grumble about the bad stuff. Why is this so?

The positive spin on grumbling is that there is always something inside us “wanting something better.” However, the negative side is that we take things for granted and are never satisfied. In this exercise, we are going to do something about all that!

### EXERCISE NITPICK THE POSITIVE

I want you to think of three things that have been right with your day. Think about: What could very easily have gone wrong but did not? What has gone wrong on any day of your life that did not happen today. You might have felt you were ready to have a good whinge, but we are going to spoil that!

Start to list them, out loud, now.

*Let it go about five minutes. You may have to give examples to keep it going. When you can see that the group has a ‘lightness’ about it, move to the discussion.*

### DISCUSSION

Ask the group, “How are you feeling as we do this?” *List the positive words that are identified like: thankful, humble, great, happy, silly, difficult...*

Have you had other reactions to this exercise?

Did you notice a change in how you felt?

*Lead the discussion to answer the question: What is the importance of ‘an attitude of gratitude’?*



### CONCLUSION

The psychologist Martin Seligman uses this exercise in therapy. For thirty days, the person must end the day naming three things for which they are thankful. This relates to an ancient truth: Thanksgiving or gratitude is the beginning of spirituality. But, like any threshold, it is an effort to get up and get into it.

In the New Testament Paul says: ‘Give thanks in all circumstances. (1 Thess 5:18; Phil 4:6; 1 Tim 4:3)



# HANDOUT MYW 2.9 GRUMBLING

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## GOAL

To intentionally focus on the good things by encouraging thanksgiving.

## INTRODUCTION

Most of us know how to nit-pick over what is wrong with our day, our life and our families. It is very easy to be negative. It is easy to grumble about the bad stuff. Why is this so?

The positive spin on grumbling is that there is always something inside us “wanting something better.” However, the negative side is that we take things for granted and are never satisfied. In this exercise, we are going to do something about all that!

## EXERCISE

Can you nit-pick three things that have been right with your day? What could very easily have gone wrong but did not? What has gone wrong on any day of your life that did not happen today. You might have felt you were ready to have a good whinge, but we are going to spoil that!

## CONCLUSION

In the New Testament, Paul says repeatedly: “Give thanks in all circumstances.” (I Thessalonians 5.18; Philippians 4.6; I Timothy 4.3)

This an ancient truth: Thanksgiving, or gratitude, is the threshold of spirituality. Like any threshold, it is an effort to get up and get into it. But it is a practice worth cultivating.







## 10. SOME MEDITATIONS

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*These five meditations are provided for you to use with the group as you wish. The aim is to demonstrate practices that will give people strength for their walk with God.*

- A. Help for the journey
- B. Masks and Fears
- C Substitutes
- D. Resonance
- E. Letter Home

### 10A. HELP FOR THE JOURNEY



#### GOAL

To become aware of different kinds of help to assist us on our journey.

**PREPARATION:** *Story from Chapter 8 'The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr'*

#### INTRODUCTION

We need a spirituality that can carry us through the things that must be faced, and which need changing. Not with cold charity or cruel idealism or intellectual certainty, but with personal compassion and sacrificial strength. We won't make it alone, and we won't make it just by wishing that we will make it. So what help is there for us?

#### STEP ONE STORY

Read the story from Martin Luther King, Jr's autobiography about his prayer at the kitchen table.

*Define the Four ways of getting helped...*



- Habits of the heart - his disciplined practice of scripture and prayer
- Deep Connection - with Christ and the planet- his connection with Christ,
- Shelter from others - the others around him (electing him)
- Receive the Gifts of life - the gifts of life (his family)

## STEP TWO      EXERCISE

**THINK** What has helped you on your spiritual journey? Identify four people or practices which have lifted you up and helped you forwards?

**PAIRS** with one other person, decide how your chosen people or practices fit under the categories of ways to get help.

**FEEDBACK** As a whole group, make a list of examples for each of the four categories. Keep this list for later PRAYER

## DISCUSSION

What can we do now to begin to develop the habits of the heart?

Gifts of life How can we thank or honour those on whose shoulders we have stood or leaned?

What sort of threat to “shelter” is consumer individualism?

How often are you expressing appreciation for those around you?

## CONCLUSION

It is easy to think that we have got to where we are through our own disciplined efforts.

However, we should not forget those in our lives who have carried us, launched us, and picked us up and set us going again. To intentionally remember this, new disciplines need to be forged. Making these four ways part of our lives will forge a new future.



## 10B. MASKS AND FEARS



### GOAL

To provide a physical ceremony to conclude

### PREPARATION

*Prayer candle. Prepare a number of small masks, at least one for each person, different colours and shapes. If you have time, you could prepare a template or buy blank masks and ask people to decorate their own. The act of making is another way of learning and talking. Provide a variety of materials, paints and glues for this purpose.*

### INTRODUCTION

Do you sometimes have the feeling you are trapped behind another false self? Living behind the Mask? The 'separate self' is like a Mask we use to protect our vulnerability, is to live behind a wall of fears. Mask = *hypocrisy* or anxiety. Some part of us hits the turn-off button in order to hide.

### STEP ONE STORY

Read one of these:

- a. Suicide note – better to die than live with the fear and the pain.
- b. A story illustrating conquering a personal fear. E.g bungy jumping, meeting an estranged mother. See "Kitchen Table Epiphany"

Read Jesus: Matthew 6. 24-34 about worry.

### STEP TWO EXERCISE

- a. Distribute the masks and materials if people are decorating their own.
- b. Ask people to choose or decorate their masks to illustrate their understanding of how they may or may not wear a mask before God and others. It will mean different things to each person. They will be asked to bring the mask to the front and place it around the prayer candle. Each person will state what the mask means to them as they put it down. Give examples like, It says I am willing to come close to the fire; It says at least that you are aware of your masks, and will work on it. Or it may be a moment to surrender an anxiety or take up a new dimension of the calling on your life. "I put down....", "I take up..."
- c. Allow time for preparation, reflection and action. Leaders should go first, and must make sure that they are honest. Play some music.

### CONCLUSION

Thank the group for their honesty and their trust in the rest of the group. Assure them that whether their response was positive, negative or somewhere in between, their openness has been appreciated.

## 10C. SUBSTITUTES



### GOAL

To re-sensitize ourselves to the folly of taking a spirituality that is a short cut substitute for the real thing.

### PREPARATION

*Whiteboard.*

### INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)

This exercise provides a way to check our bearings. There have been many thinkers who have said that religion or God is a just perversion of our own deepest desires. They are completely

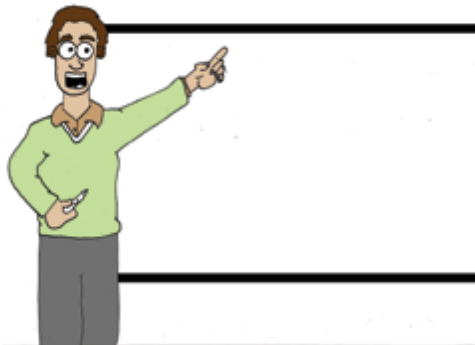
correct in one thing – we all have the tendency to do this, but this is not the spirituality of Jesus.

We have all seen Elvis imitators, loved the music, and been amused that they are not the real thing. We can have a spirituality like that. It can have a certain appeal, but lacks the real spark. We have all experienced religion that lacks authenticity, or needs a reality check, or is an escape from reality, or has obviously lost touch with the reality of Jesus.

So we should make the effort to identify when we have tried to reduce Jesus to a shape that reinforces our own comfort zones or our own guilt trips. This exercise will give us a way to do that.

### STEP ONE EXERCISE (10 minutes)

In pairs or threes, discuss what would you feel if you booked for a whale watching tour and got shown a fish in a tank.



### STEP TWO FEEDBACK (20 minutes)

As a whole group, ask what the different responses were to 'the substitute' vs 'the real.'

Ask: What is the positive quality you gain when you get 'the original'? How can you tell?

### STEP THREE DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

a. Where have you, in your experience, seen this 'substitution' in the spiritual arena?

b. It is quite possible that we have done some of this during *Makes You Wonder*. Where, if anywhere, have you been aware of this?

c. Make a list of ways that can we do to prevent 'substitutes' in our spirituality. This will be a bold and valuable list.

### CONCLUSION (1 minute)

We need to build in to our life some vigilance and testing, some trusting and trying, some solo time and some honest community relationships.

## 10D. RESONANCE

### GOAL

To illustrate physically the way that the human spirit responds to God's Spirit, through the resonance of one instrument at a distance from another.

**PREPARATION:** *This works well as a concluding meditation. Set up two stringed instruments tuned together, and a microphone to amplify them. You will need to practice beforehand so that you know how it works with the equipment you have.*



### INTRODUCTION (1 minute)

Call the group together and ask for quiet.

These instruments will demonstrate how one thing can resonate in sympathy with the notes from another, sounding without having to be touched. In the patterns of the universe is a divine song that finds a resonance in the human heart.

### EXERCISE (5 minutes)

Pluck the E string of one instrument, put the mic close to it, then damp the string. Then turn to the next instrument very near, and put the mic up to that one. It should be faintly humming as well. Do it two or three times within the five minutes of silence.

Project onto the screen, or write on the whiteboard:

“O Lord, you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless  
until they find their rest in you.”

*St Augustine. 4<sup>th</sup> century*

### CONCLUSION

God wants people to know Him, and does not leave us without signs pointing to him.

### OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS OF RESONANCE

- Shine a torch on a luminous object, like a glow stick. When it is in the dark, it glows.
- Wind across a wire or the mouthpiece of a flute causes it to hum.
- Strong winds can twist a bridge, not just through force, but through resonance building up larger and larger amplitude, like the Tacoma Bridge, Washington in 1940.

[youtube.com/watch?v=XggxeuFDaDU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=XggxeuFDaDU)

## 10E. LETTER FROM HOME

CONCLUDING EXERCISE if this has been a series of several workshops

### PREPARATION

*Provide blank pages, pens or pencils, and envelopes for letters*

### INSTRUCTIONS

Write a letter to yourself about what God has been saying to you today and what you suspect it means. Seal the letter in the envelope provided, and write your own name and address on. On the back write "My Discoveries" and today's date. We will post these to you in one month. By then, "something else" will have happened, and you will see for yourself how attentive you are to God.

Put your address on the envelope and seal it.

*Collect the sealed envelopes. Diarise the time when you will send them out and do it.*

### OPTIONAL CONCLUDING PRAYER

Use the litany generated by the *MYW2 Mapping My Life* exercise. Begin by re-titling it: "God you were waiting for us when..." then ask everyone to say it together.

Or use this prayer, or something you write:

*God, I am not certain what the patterns are,  
or what they mean.  
But it's good to admit that  
I sense there is a meaning there.  
I do not ask that I can understand what it is all about,  
Nor do I ask that I should know the meaning at every turn.  
But I ask simply that you don't leave me alone  
To sort it out by myself.  
I want to be open  
to the resonance of the Creator,  
to the bigness of God,  
to the possibilities of knowing you,  
fully alive.  
Amen*



# HANDOUT MYW 2.10 MEDITATIONS

## A. HELP FOR THE JOURNEY

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### GOAL

To become aware of different kinds of help available to us on our journey.

### INTRODUCTION

We need a spirituality that can carry us through the things that must be faced, and which need changing. Not one of cold charity or cruel idealism or intellectual certainty, but of personal compassion and sacrificial strength. We won't make it alone, and we won't make it just by wishing that we will make it. So what help is there for us?

### STORY

Martin Luther King Jr's kitchen table.

Four ways of getting helped:

- Habits of the heart - his disciplined practice of scripture and prayer
- Deep connection - with Christ and the planet; his connection with Christ
- Shelter from others - those around him, those persecuting him
- Receiving the gifts of life – what he was thankful for in his life, like his family

### EXERCISE

What has helped you on your spiritual journey? Name four people or practices which have lifted you up and helped you forwards. Which of the categories from above do they fit under?

### CONCLUSION

It is easy to think that we have got to where we are through our own disciplined efforts. However, we should not forget those in our lives who have carried us, launched us, and picked us up and set us going again. To intentionally remember this, new disciplines need to be forged. Making these four ways part of our lives will forge a new future.





# HANDOUT MYW 2.10 MEDITATIONS

## B. MASKS & FEARS

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### GOAL

To provide a ritual to commit to positive change.

### INTRODUCTION

Do you sometimes have the feeling you are trapped behind another false self? Living behind a Mask. Sometimes we generate a 'separate self' like a mask to protect our vulnerability. But this can cause us to live behind a wall of fears. Mask can mean either hypocrisy or anxiety.

### STORY

Matthew 6:24-34 about worry.

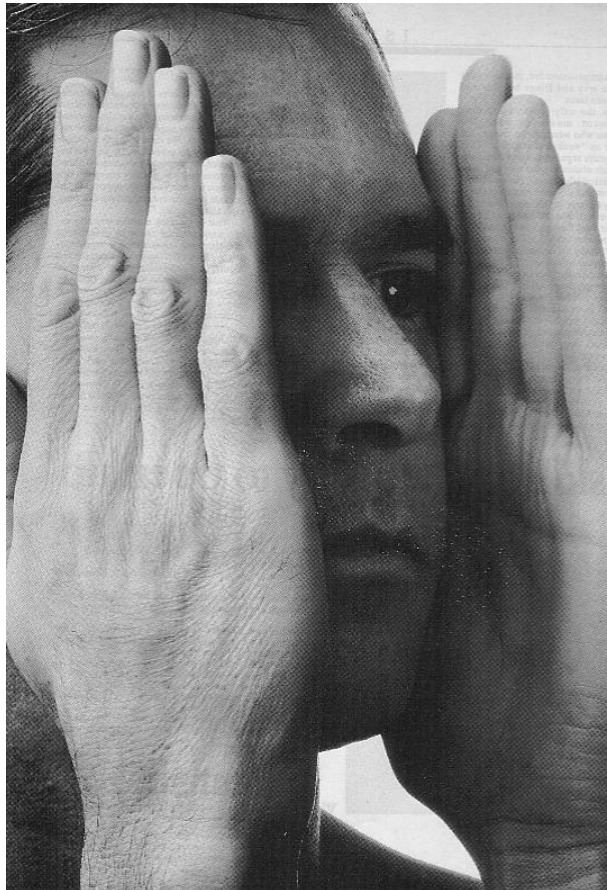
### EXERCISE WITH MASKS

The leader will provide masks or materials to make your own. Choose or decorate your mask to illustrate your understanding of how you may or may not wear a mask before God and others. It will mean different things to each person.

Then you will be asked to bring the mask to the front and place it around the prayer candle, and state what the mask means as you put it down. Eg "It says I am willing to come close to the fire," or "It says I am aware of my masks," or "I put down this mask that represents an anxiety," or "This mask represents a new dimension or calling on my life."

### CONCLUSION

Thank you for your honesty whether you said yes, no or not now.







# HANDOUT MYW 2.10 MEDITATIONS

## C. SUBSTITUTES

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### GOAL

To re-sensitize ourselves to the folly of taking a spirituality that is a short cut or substitute for the real thing.

### INTRODUCTION

This exercise provides a way to check our bearings. There have been many thinkers who have said that religion or God is a just perversion of our own deepest desires. They are completely correct in one thing. We all have the tendency to do this, but this is not the spirituality of Jesus.

When people watch Elvis imitators, they may love the music, and been amused by the impersonation, but they are not the real deal. We can have a spirituality like that, where we love the music and enjoy the spectacle. It can have a certain appeal, but it lacks the spark of the real thing. We may have experienced religion that lacks authenticity, that is an escape from reality, or that has clearly lost touch with the character of Jesus.

So we should make the effort to identify when we have tried to reduce Jesus to a shape that reinforces our own comfort zones or comforts us during our own guilt trips. This exercise will give us a way to do that.



### DISCUSSION

- What would you feel if you booked for a whale watching tour and got shown a fish in a tank?
- What are your feelings in response to 'the substitute' vs 'the real.'
- What is the positive quality you gain when you get 'the original'?
- How can you tell?

### CONCLUSION

We need to build in to our life some vigilance and testing, some trusting and trying, some solo time and some honest community relationships.





# HANDOUT MYW2.10 MEDITATIONS

## D. RESONANCE

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### GOAL

To illustrate physically the way that the human spirit responds to God's Spirit, through the resonance of one instrument when it is at a distance from another.

### INTRODUCTION

Some instruments demonstrate how one thing can resonate in sympathy with the notes from another, sounding without having to be touched. In the patterns of the universe is a divine song that finds a resonance in the human heart.

### PRAYER

O Lord, you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

*St Augustine 4<sup>th</sup> century*

### OTHER EXERCISES IN RESONANCE

Shine a torch on a glow stick or another luminous object. It will then glow when in the dark.

Wind across a wire or a flute mouthpiece causes it to hum.



Strong winds can twist a bridge, not just through force, but through resonance building up larger and larger amplitude.

*Tacoma Bridge, Washington. 1940. Wind at 35mph built up resonance on the span until it destroyed the bridge*

### CONCLUSION

God wants people to know Him, and does not leave them without signs pointing to him.



# HANDOUT MYW 2.10 MEDITATIONS

## E. LETTER FROM HOME

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Write a letter to yourself about what God may be saying to you today, and what you suspect it means. Seal it in the envelope provided, and write your own name and address on the front. On the back write, "My Discovery" and today's date. It will be collected and posted to you in one month. By then, "something else" will have happened, and you will see for yourself how attentive you are to God.

### CONCLUDING PRAYER

*God, I am not certain what the patterns are,  
or what they mean.  
But it's good to admit that  
I sense there is a meaning there.  
I do not ask that I can understand what it is all about,  
Nor do I ask that I should know the meaning at every turn.  
But I ask simply that you don't leave me alone  
To sort it out by myself.  
I want to be open  
to the resonance of the Creator,  
to the bigness of God,  
to the possibilities of knowing you,  
fully alive.  
Amen*





# THE SKILLS OF COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL LIE IN SHARING FOUR STORIES.

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**MYW1. MY STORY** How God is in my life — my own experience of Jesus and the difference he makes in my life.

**MYW2. YOUR STORY** Everyone is spiritual and God is everywhere, but most people have trouble identifying what that means. Here are some ways to help a friend identify God's presence in their life.

**MYW3. OUR STORY** The story of God's People: the very fallible local and global church. How did we get to be this way? How did we get our Bible? What do we take for granted in Australia which has come from the influence of Christianity in past centuries in other places?

**MYW4. THE STORY** of Jesus Christ, the only son of God. What are the events of his Life that demonstrate that Jesus is Saviour and Lord? What did Jesus say that makes people follow him today? How can we answer the tough questions that are directed against the claims of Jesus' story?

## \* WHY DO WE NEED ALL FOUR STORIES?

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Different authors and evangelists describe evangelism in different ways, and they each have a different starting point.

Some emphasise proclamation of the gospel (in Greek: kerygma). We call this 'The Story'.

Some emphasise starting with your own testimony or word of witness about the blessings of knowing God. We call this 'My Story'.

Others want to help people discover the presence or mystery of God in their own experience. We call this 'Your Story'.

Still others want to explain the church community to an educated and globally aware society. We call this 'Our Story'.

Each group has a valid starting point. That doesn't mean that the others are wrong. All four stories need to be shared, at some time, before we can consider we have communicated the gospel. Start with what you know. But don't stop there!



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