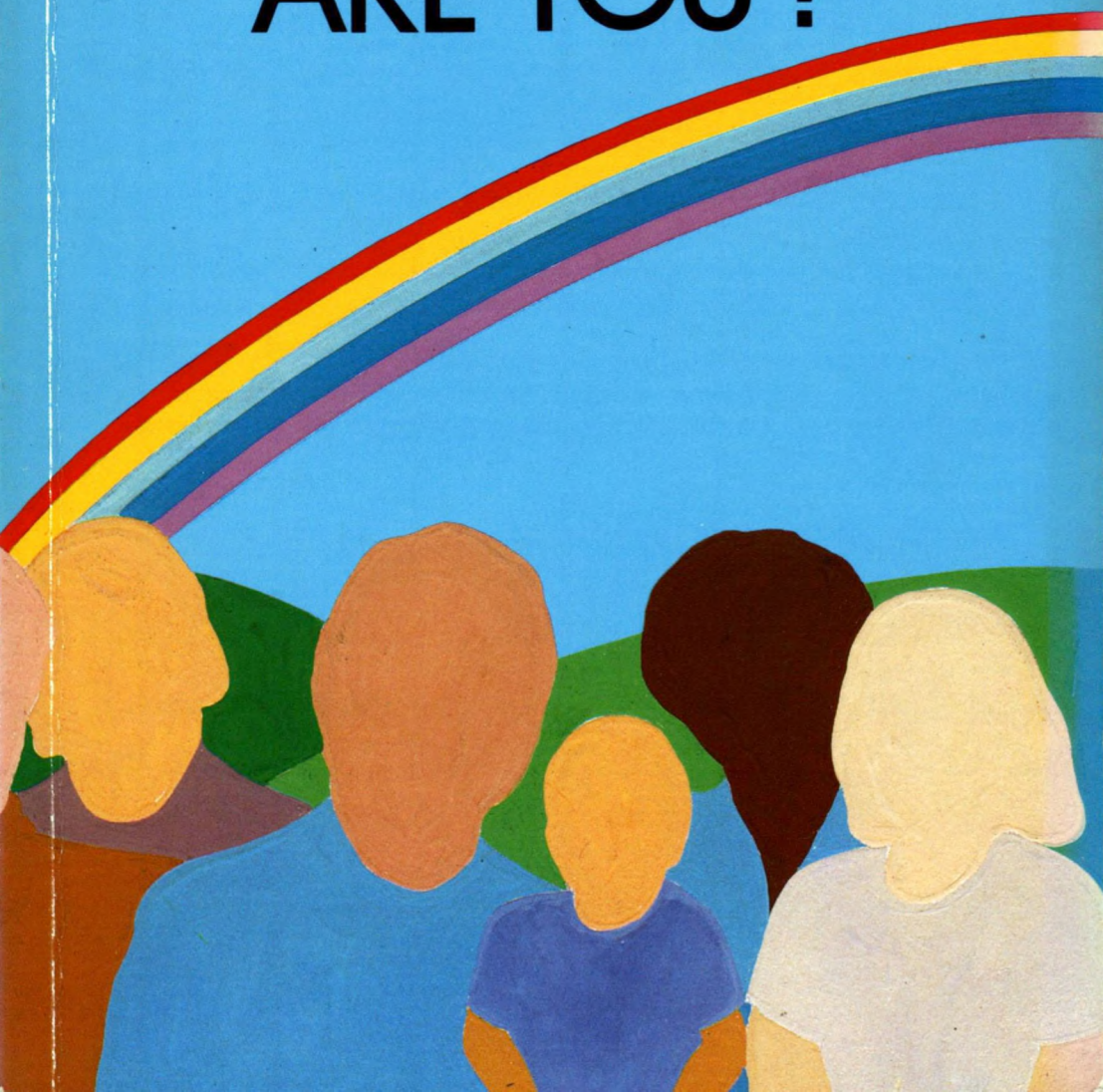




WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU?

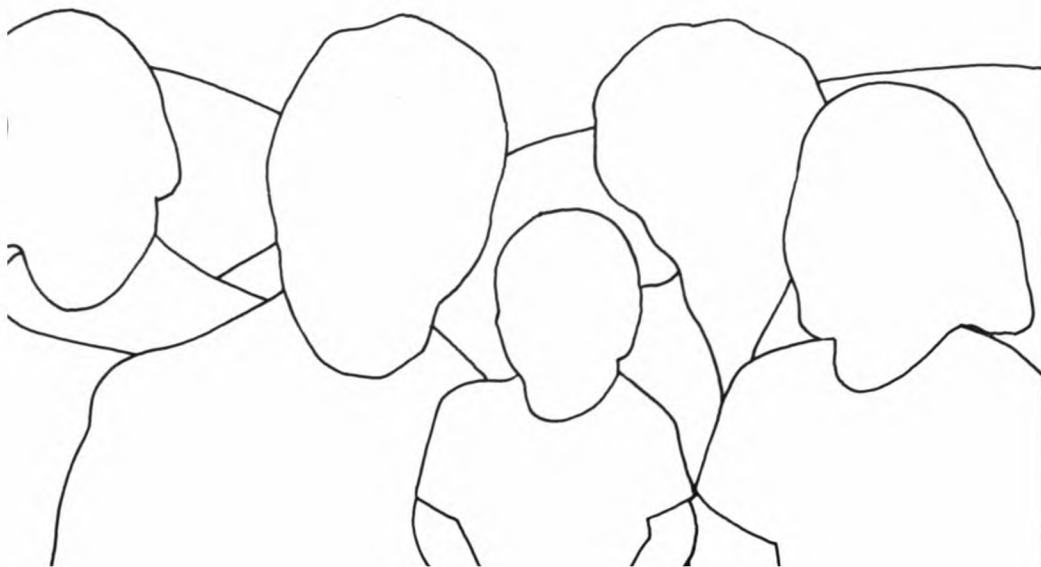




WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU?

The aim of this book is to enable groups of people from different churches to

- explore the relationships that people have in their family, in places where they live and work, and in the world
- reflect on those relationships
- grow in understanding as to how, in those relationships, they can relate their faith in God to their daily life, and plan for action as a result of it



Published by
BIBLE SOCIETY
Stonehill Green Westlea Swindon SN5 7DG
ISBN 0-564-07802-6

BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Inter-Church House 35-41 Lower Marsh
London SE1 7RL
ISBN 0-85169-192-7

CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
38-40 Eccleston Square London SW1V 1PD
ISBN 0-85183-712-3

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First published 1987

Printed in Great Britain
by Stanley L Hunt (Printers) Ltd, Rushden, Northants

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Who on earth are you?: Lent '88.

I. Christian life

I. Tale-tellers

248.4 BV4051.2

ISBN 0-564-07802-6 Bible Society
ISBN 0-85169-192-7 British Council of Churches
ISBN 0-85183-712-3 Catholic Truth Society

Acknowledgements

Photographs: Page 11 Steve Benbow/Colorific! page 19 Zeffa; page 25 John Moss/Colorific! page 31 Zeffa; page 37 Pictor International—London.

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PREFACE

This is the second Lent study course sponsored by the **Not Strangers But Pilgrims** Inter-Church Process. The first of these, *What on Earth is the Church For?* (Lent '86) created huge popular demand for a follow-up. Here it is.

The aim of the whole exercise is to help Christians belonging to different churches to grow together in their understanding of each other and of God. This is a long process, and the churches which have set out to be "not strangers but pilgrims" are facing a long journey. But the spirit is good. The goal is important. The experience is enjoyable. We continue to receive much support from local radio stations, which played such a vital role in Lent '86. And I am sure you will find that the material in this latest study guide can spark off much worthwhile discussion and subsequent action.

I warmly commend it to local church groups, and hope it will be widely used.

John Ebor
Archbishop of York
Chairman of the Inter-Church Meeting



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LENT '88 AND THE INTER-CHURCH PROCESS

Not Strangers but Pilgrims was the name given to a three-year "Inter-Church Process" by the leaders of thirty-two churches in England, Scotland, and Wales, when they met in May 1985. The aim of the Process was to pray, reflect, and debate together on the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of its mission.

As part of this Process, about one million people took part in a series of group discussions in Lent 1986 based on the book **What on Earth is the Church For?** Many groups worked on material broadcast by fifty-seven radio stations, while others used a cassette, and some interpreted the book in their own way. Afterwards, the groups were invited to send in a report of their findings. These reports, together with 100,000 individually completed questionnaires, were the basis of a book published in 1986, **Views from the Pews** (now available from the BCC at £1.00 including postage and packing).

From the questionnaires it was clear that many people found the group experience very valuable. They discovered how much they had in common with people of other denominations. They also discovered that to explore the differences between them was an enjoyable experience, not a frightening one. People wanted to continue learning about each other, about the Bible, and about the Christian faith. What's more, they

wanted to do all this together, in a way that gave them an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings, and in such a way that Jesus was freed from the tangle of theological jargon that they felt had been put round him.

Who on earth are you? takes as its starting point one of the conclusions of Lent '86: that Christians are afraid to share themselves with others. It is designed to help people overcome this fear. It also moves from concentrating on the Church, to looking outwards to see how faith and the world relate. It will help God's people to think about God and to work out how to act faithfully as a result. God's people will be encouraged to "do theology" for themselves.

Who on earth are you? is a workbook which helps groups face some important issues in today's world. It isn't complete in itself. It needs to be broadened by the programmes that local radio stations will produce. It needs group members to give of themselves to make it work well. They need to be open to God.

Put these things together and you have an exciting mixture. I wish you joy and fun as you discover more together about what it means to be God's people in God's world today.

Peter Verity
Chairman, Lent '88 Committee

INTRODUCTION



As you listen to the conversations around you, you will find that most of them consist of stories. On the bus, in the home, at work or in the pub, people tell each other stories, often in enormous detail—"And then she said to me . . ." The point of the story is often not important. It is the story that matters.

The Bible, too, is full of stories. This may be because it is better to tell someone about the truth by saying what happened, than by using ideas. The language of the Bible is full of "doing" words. Often, when the writers want to describe what God is like, they tell a story about what God does. In the New Testament, much of the material of the four gospels is made up of stories: stories that Jesus told, stories about Jesus, and of course the most important story of all, the one describing Jesus' death and resurrection.

Many times, when Jesus was asked a question or wanted to get a point across, he told a story. When asked to explain it, he said that if you had ears to hear then you would understand it. If a story has to be explained, then there is no point in telling it. Just like a joke.

Jesus seems to have been keen that those who heard the story should be free to make up their own minds about what it meant. A story, once told, belongs to the hearer; it is out of control of the teller. The hearer makes of it what they want to. Another feature of a story is that it is easy to remember. It sticks like a bur, and you worry away at it until you have made sense of it.



Stories seem to be a basic biblical way of communicating truth. They help people see things in a new way, to say, "Oh, now I see!" They leave people free to make up their own minds. Even to give a story a title is to decide beforehand what it means.

This book deliberately uses the same method. It provides opportunities for people to tell their own stories and to put those stories alongside five stories from Luke's Gospel. It doesn't tell people what they ought to believe, but leaves them free to make up their own minds as they discuss with others. As people explore together, they will discover more of what their faith means, and how they can share that faith with others.



LUKE AND HIS STORIES

The writer of the third gospel, Luke, seems to have understood all about stories. He ought to be called "the story-teller". He includes many stories that the other gospel writers don't mention. His eye for the details of a story is such that one tradition describes him as a painter.

The five stories used in this book all come from Luke, and all come from the material that is to be found in Luke alone. These stories share several features that are found in other Lukan stories. They all seem to have two parts, with a break in the middle. Perhaps Luke was concerned to show that Jesus was the middle-point of the story of God's dealings with the world. He may also have been trying to show a "conversion" in the middle. Whatever the reason, the stories all seem to start in the open air, or away from home, and finish inside, or at home. It is almost as though Luke is trying to say that his stories belong to us where we are, in our home. The story of Jesus belongs to our everyday familiar life:

- the tax collector goes to the Temple to pray, and goes home justified;
- when the younger son returns home he finds his father's forgiveness;
- Zacchaeus takes Jesus into his own home;
- the wounded man is taken to an inn;
- the two disciples recognize Jesus when they invite him into their home.

That makes these stories very relevant for us. We try to make sense of our faith in the ordinary events of our daily life. We think we understand it when we meet together for the "religious" occasions, but what does it mean when we get home? Luke's stories may help us see that it is at home that the message of Jesus makes sense, and "at home" can mean at work, at leisure, or in the community. The odd change of scene in the middle means that these stories offer us two ways of looking at

things. They can help us to break away from our usual way of looking at things, to see things from a different angle. They can help us to be "converted". For example, once we see that the boundaries that we put round the idea of "neighbour" include even those we hate, the idea of neighbour will look totally different.

But Luke lived in a very different time and place from us. He saw things differently from the way we see them today. It is easy to think that, because the stories are written for us in our language and are so familiar, they describe our land and our culture. As you read the stories study the text carefully. Don't make any assumptions. You will find things that you never knew were there before.



As you work through this book in your group don't expect the answers to be obvious. Don't expect there to be only one answer either. The book is intended to be like a story, an invitation to look at things in a different way. This may upset you, excite you, and change you. But adults learn best when they are invited to join in. It's like learning to cook. You learn by cooking—and sometimes getting it wrong—not just by reading the cookery book. This book is like a cookery book—the

“cooking” takes place as the group meets to talk and pray.

Two practical points before you begin. First, a workbook can only point to areas of discussion. It cannot talk about the particular issues that arise in each group’s locality. All the time, as the group is working, think about the issues that concern you locally as a group, and opportunities and problems that exist in your community. Many of them will be the result of things that are happening in the wider community, and it is obviously important to consider those wider implications. Yet if the group spends all its time thinking about things in general, then the purpose of the whole exercise will have been lost. So the question is, “How can Christians of different denominations so work and pray together at a local level, that they can co-operate with God in God’s mission in the world?” If that question is not answered then, however much we may have enjoyed meeting together, we will have failed. And, what is much more important, we will have failed God.

This year you are not asked to return a questionnaire to the ICP, but to work together in your local areas and compile reports, action plans, and projects there.

Second, do read the leader’s guide on page 45 before you begin Session One. It will explain how everything fits together. In each session the first two sections (“Beginnings” and “For discussion”) should be omitted when radio is being used.

God is at work in all sorts of ways that we may not have recognized. As you work through this book be ready to try and listen to God. In so doing we may discover what God wants from us in the world. We must try to listen before rushing off to do what we think God wants.

The authors

SESSION ONE



1 I'M BEING FRAMED

—how do we see people?

- Aims:**
- to introduce members of the group to each other
 - to introduce the method of working used in the book
 - to explore the ways in which we put labels on other people

Beginnings and *For discussion* should be omitted when using radio

BEGINNINGS

a READ THIS POEM ALOUD

A Crabbit Old Woman *

“What do you see, nurses, what do you see?

Are you thinking when you are looking at me—

A crabbit old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice—“I do wish
you’d try.”

Who seems not to notice the things that
you do,

And forever is losing a stocking or shoe,
Who, unresisting or not, lets you do as you
will,

With bathing and feeding, the long day to
fill.

Is that what you’re thinking, is that what
you see?

Then open your eyes, nurse, you’re not
looking at me.

I’ll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
As I rise at your bidding, as I eat at your
will.

I’m a small child of ten with a father and
mother,

Brothers and sisters who love one another;
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her
feet,

Dreaming that soon now a lover she’ll
meet;

A bride soon at twenty—my heart gives a
leap,

Remembering the vows that I promised to
keep;

At twenty-five now I have young of my
own,

Who need me to build a secure happy
home:

A woman of thirty, my young now grow
fast,

Bound to each other with ties that should
last:
At forty, my young sons have grown and
have gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't
mourn;
At fifty once more babies play round my
knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and
me.
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead,
I look at the future, I shudder with dread,
For my young are all rearing young of their
own,
And I think of the years and the love that
I've known.
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel—
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a
fool.
The body it crumbles, grace and vigour
depart.
There is now a stone where I once had a
heart;
But inside this old carcase a young girl still
dwells,
And now and again my battered heart
swells.
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living life over again.
I think of the years all too few—gone too
fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can
last.
So open your eyes, nurses, open and see
Not a crabbit old woman, look closer—see
ME!!

IN PAIRS What do you want to say to the
old woman and to the nurse?

IN THE GROUP State what each pair
wants to say to the two people.

*This poem first appeared in *Beacon House News*, a
magazine of the Northern Ireland Association for
Mental Health. A young nurse from Ulster worked at
the Ashludie Hospital, Dundee, and discovered the
poem when going through the possessions of an old
woman who had recently died.

b PICTURES THAT TELL A STORY

IN PAIRS Give a title to each “frame” in the sequence.

IN THE GROUP State the titles the pairs have chosen.



FOR DISCUSSION

"There's none so deaf as those who will not hear or so blind as those who will not see." We have all been deliberately deaf or blind at some time in our life. We switch off when something is boring, walk away when it is embarrassing, or change the subject to avoid a row.

Often, our deafness or blindness is not deliberate. We are not always aware of what we are doing or why we are doing it. We have always reacted in particular ways because of the way we have always looked at things. We learn how to see things from our parents; we share the same point of view as our class, or our country. Sometimes, people are even trained to see things in a particular way. For instance, the titles you gave to each picture above were influenced by the expectations you had as a result of the way you see things.

The nurse in the poem was not aware of how she was seeing the old woman. The woman was in hospital and so she saw a "patient", not a person with a long story, with feelings and memories. The hospital becomes the "frame" through which the nurse sees the old woman. We would probably see her in the same way. But the poem changes the frame, so that we see her as a child, a lover, a young mother, a new widow. She becomes different. In the same way, the first picture in the pairs on page 14 looks very different when it is seen in the light of the picture after it. The frame changes.

When people introduce themselves they help to create the frame through which others see them. They give themselves labels. Often the way we introduce ourselves is affected by the labels we give to others. At work, or at a party, we will tell people one thing; in an ecumenical church group we will tell them another. The sort of group we are in helps to form the sort of frame we have in our mind.

One important label describes what a person does for a living. One of the first things we ask a stranger is, "What do you do?" Once we know that label, then we can place people, and



we feel comfortable. (It is interesting to note that at one time, the names people had described their job: Miller, Archer, Fletcher, Smith, and so on. This still carries on in some places e.g. Wales—Dai the Milk.) The question, "What do you do?" belongs to a frame where working for money is the way we measure worth. But some people don't **do** anything for money—they may be retired or unemployed, or bringing up children. They find themselves replying, "I'm just a housewife", "I don't do anything, I'm retired", "I'm on the dole".



BRINGING IT HOME



Labels help us to put people into frames: sex, age, colour, class, job, church, single or married. Sometimes labels are important, but often they stop us seeing beneath the label to the person. "That person is old, and old people . . .", "That person is black, and black people . . .", "That person is unemployed. . . is a non-Christian. . . is an ex-convict . . ."

However, putting labels on people is not always a bad thing. The label "doctor" means that we can expect the person underneath the label to behave in a certain way when we are ill. Similar things may be true about the police, or the garage mechanic, a teacher, or a waitress. Sometimes it even helps to have a label for ourselves, so that we can know how to behave in a certain situation. This seems to be true especially when we have to do something we would not otherwise want to do—like a father or a mother facing a dirty nappy!

a WHAT ARE THE LABELS IN THIS GROUP?

IN THE GROUP Take a large sheet of paper, and on it list all the kinds of labels you can think of which could be given to people in the group. One way of doing this is to list all the words you can think of that can follow, "I am. . .". For example, "I am a woman", "I am a mother", "I am Welsh", "I am working-class", "I am a Baptist". . .



ON YOUR OWN Take or make a luggage label and divide it into four sections. In three of the sections, write down a "label" that you think is important for the group to know. In the fourth section, write down the label that you think is the most important.

IN THE GROUP Discuss what you have written on your luggage label and so introduce yourself to everyone. What labels seem most important to your group? What labels are missing? (For example, see the list of labels above.)

b GIVING LABELS TO CHURCHES

ON YOUR OWN Write down the labels you think of when you think about your own church and other churches. (For example, "My church is free, believes in the Bible, is open; other churches are narrow, inward-looking, too strict, too woolly in their teaching, stick too loosely to the Bible.")



A BIBLE VIEW

Read aloud the story below. It is about two men who came to the Temple to pray.

9 Jesus also told this parable to people who were sure of their own goodness and despised everybody else.¹⁰ Once there were two men who went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

11 “The Pharisee stood apart by himself and prayed, ‘I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest, or an adulterer, like everybody else. I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there.’¹² I fast two days a week, and I give you a tenth of all my income.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, ‘God, have pity on me, a sinner!’¹⁴ I tell you,” said Jesus, “the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For everyone who makes himself great will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be made great.”

Luke 18.9–14

IN TWO SUB-GROUPS One sub-group takes the point of view of the Pharisee, the other of the tax collector.

Either: In each sub-group, think about the story from your character's point of view, and choose television characters that you think are like the two men in the story as you see them. Then compare the two lists of people. Discuss the differences and the similarities in the lists.

Or: In each sub-group, make a list of words that describe the two men in the story from your character's point of view. Then compare the two lists and discuss the differences and the similarities.

The way we understand stories often shows the “frames” that we bring to situations. For example, the Pharisee could only see the tax collector in one kind of frame. As we saw in the Introduction, stories invite us to see things from a different frame—to question them. If you reflect on a story without trying to force it into your frame, then all sorts of things can happen. Frames can change, and suddenly you can see things in a different way. As you see things differently, you are changed, turned round, converted. This can happen when you reflect on the stories that Jesus told, and on the story of Jesus.

SOMETHING TO DO

a A STORY TO THINK ABOUT

"The Sunday school teacher was very pleased with himself. He had just taught a very good lesson on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. To make sure that the children got the point, he used it in the prayer at the end of the lesson: 'O God, we do thank you that we are not like the Pharisees . . .'"

It may be that the person that we most dislike in a story is the person who is most like us.

- b Think about the people you meet in your daily life. What do you need to do to see them as real people, and not just as "labels"? Do you know the name of your postman? Or your milkman? Is the person at the supermarket checkout just a label to you? What about the people you see on television? Do you think of the woman who reads the news as "just a pretty face", or someone else as "just a politician"?

The labels we use can tell us a great deal about our attitudes to other people. We do not expect elderly people to welcome new ideas, a woman to be able to mend a fuse, or a man to be able to cook. What are the labels you use, and what do they tell you about your attitudes?

What can you do to get behind the labels you use? How will you do it in this group?

TO PRAY

Read "The Crabbit Old Woman" again. Sit in silence and pray for all the people that we label and treat in a certain way as a result.

Say together:

"Lord, help us to see behind the labels that we give to people, so we can see the person who is known and loved by you. Lord, we pray that we may receive our sight."

AT HOME

When you get home, write down in a notebook what you did during this session and what you have learned. Use this notebook each evening as you think about the day you've had, and add any new thoughts you have.

Add to this "diary" after each group session and bring it to the last session, when the group will be asked to think about what it learned in its work together.



SESSION TWO



2 THE GENERATION GAME

—relationships in the family

- Aims:**
- to explore the positive and negative aspects of relationships within a family, including the family of the church
 - to understand those whose family relationships are not good, or are unconventional, and plan some appropriate responses

Beginnings and *For discussion* should be omitted when using radio



BEGINNINGS

Look at this series of pictures of family scenes of various kinds.

ON YOUR OWN Decide what you think is going on in each picture.

IN PAIRS Share your thoughts about the pictures. Make up a title or "balloon" conversation for each one.

IN THE GROUP Make two lists of feelings about "family", one to show the good things, the other the not-so-good, or even destructive. Discuss how you feel about the lists.





arguments often boil over to make it "one of the worst Christmases we've ever had".

Families used to be able to help each other more. Everyone's relatives lived within a mile or two of each other, and knew and looked after each other. Today, people are much more mobile. The family unit now is often the parents (or parent) of two or three children. Most of the help and support for each other has to come from within the home itself. The strain is often too great, and the result can be explosive.

Tension in the family is often focused on young people or elderly parents. This is highlighted in the story of the mother of teenage children who got fed up with hearing her children call her "a wrinkly" and her mother "a crumbly". They stopped when she began to call them "pimply".

FOR DISCUSSION

The "soap powder" family and the "soap opera" family are two pictures of family life on television. The soap powder family has a young and glamorous mother, not a hair out of place, who patiently accepts all the filthy clothes that two lively children and a messy husband can throw at her. The family radiates love and good health, and seems to be perfect.

Life with the soap opera family is very different. The darker side of family life can be seen: jealousy, divorce, single-parent families, fights, arguments, affairs—all in one hour! It is often life at its most destructive, and yet millions watch, fascinated.

The soap powder family in some ways represents what people want from family life. The soap opera family is often more like what they have got. Perhaps people want too much from family life.

Look at the way many people experience Christmas. It is pictured in the media as *the* family festival, when peace and goodwill flow in super-abundance. Yet it makes many elderly and single people feel very lonely. When families do get together, tensions and



Growing up can be both exciting and frightening, not just for the adolescent but for the parents as well. Inevitably, there are tensions as the young person moves towards independence, and sometimes the strain feels unbearable. But it has to be gone through if the young person is to grow up. Today, the problems are made worse when there are not enough jobs or houses for them so that sometimes, when they have left, they are told to go back home.

At the other end of life, the problems can be just as great. Elderly people want to keep their independence, even if they are unwell. They also need to feel needed. Coming to terms with their loss of importance and the changing roles in the family can be hard, both for them and for the rest of the family. The "carer" becomes the "cared for", and this brings all sorts of problems. Society is trying to help by providing sheltered accommodation and the like, but many people feel it is still the duty of a family to provide for its own old people.

BRINGING IT HOME

- a **IN PAIRS** Tell your partner two stories from your family history. Choose one that is positive and one that is negative.

IN THE GROUP Then tell the group as much as you want to of the experiences you described.

- b The church is often pictured as a family. What are the positive and negative results of this? Are there any differences in the way in which different churches think about it?

A BIBLE VIEW

Read aloud the following passage.

11 Jesus went on to say, "There was once a man who had two sons.

¹²The younger one said to him, 'Father, give me my share of the property now.' So the man divided his property between his two sons.

¹³After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. ¹⁴He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and he was left without a thing. ¹⁵So he

went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. ¹⁶He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. ¹⁷At last he came to his senses and said, 'All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers.' ²⁰So he got up and started back to his father.

"He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms round his son, and kissed him. ²¹'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' ²²But the father called his servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. ²³Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! ²⁴For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.' And so the feasting began.

²⁵"In the meantime the elder son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him, 'What's going on?' ²⁷Your brother has come back home,' the servant answered, 'and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.'

²⁸'The elder brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I

have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends!³⁰ But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!"³¹ "My son," the father answered, "you are always here with me, and everything I have is yours."³² But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found."

Luke 15.11–32

a **IN THE GROUP** Decide who the story is about. Give it a title.

b **ON YOUR OWN** Imagine you are the father in the story. How do things look from your point of view?

IN THE GROUP How would you, as the father, answer the question, "Who is the party for?"

c Repeat the process of b, but this time imagine that you are the younger son. Answer the questions, "What made you come home?" and "How do you feel now that you have come home?"

d Repeat the process of b, but imagine that you are the older son. Answer the question, "What is stopping you going into the party?"

SOMETHING TO DO

People need the support that being part of an extended family (one that has grandparents, aunts, and uncles living close to each other) can give. Think about your own community. Where can individuals get such support? Do they get it? What can you do, as a group, to provide it for the young and elderly in your

area? Think about this particularly for those who are not getting it elsewhere.

If the church is a family, can it be better at providing support for the people in the church who don't otherwise get it? What about the other churches, who might be thought of as "cousins"?

TO PRAY

Read together this poem by Michel Quoist.

I LIKE YOUNGSTERS

God says: I like youngsters. I want people to be like them.

I don't like old people unless they are still children.

I want only children in my kingdom; this has been decreed from the beginning of time.

Youngsters—twisted, humped, wrinkled, white-bearded—all kinds of youngsters, but youngsters.

There is no changing it, it has been decided, there is room for no one else.

I like little children because my likeness has not yet been dulled in them.

They have not botched my likeness, they are new, pure without a blot, without a smear.

So, when I gently lean over them, I recognize myself in them.

I like them because they are still growing, they are still improving.

They are on the road, they are on their way.

But with grown-ups there is nothing to expect any more.

They will no longer grow, no longer improve.

They have come to a full stop.

It is disastrous—grown-ups think they have arrived.

I like youngsters because they are still struggling, because they are still sinning.

Not because they sin—if you understand me—but because they know that they sin, 23

and they say so, and they try not to sin any more.

But I don't like grown-ups, they never harm anyone, they have nothing to reproach themselves for.

I can't forgive them. I have nothing to forgive.

It is a pity, it is indeed a pity, because it is not true.

But above all, I like youngsters because of the look in their eyes. In their eyes I can read their age.

In my heaven, there will be only five-year-old eyes, for I know of nothing more beautiful than the pure eyes of a child.

It is not surprising, for I live in children, and it is I who look out through their eyes.

When pure eyes meet yours, it is I who smile at you through the flesh.

But on the other hand, I know of nothing sadder than lifeless eyes in the face of a child.

The windows are open, but the house is empty.

Two eyes are there, but no light.

And, saddened, I stand at the door, and wait in the cold and knock. I am eager to get in.

And he, the child, is alone.

He fattens, he hardens, he dries up, he gets old. Poor old fellow!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Open, all of you, little old men!

It is I, your god, the Eternal, risen from the dead, coming to bring back to life the child in you.

Hurry! Now is the time. I am ready to give you again the beautiful face of a child, the beautiful eyes of a child . . .

For I love youngsters, and I want everyone to be like them.

I like youngsters, Michel Quoist.

Now sit in silence and pray for any young people you know.

Now pray, silently, for people who live on their own.

Say together:

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked people and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

(Collect for Good Friday, *Alternative Service Book*)

AT HOME

- a Go back to your diary. Write down what you have learned about "Family" and God. When you pray "Our Father", what pictures of God do you have?
- b Do something during the week that expresses what you have discovered. For example, visit someone you know who lives alone, or write a letter to someone in your family who you haven't seen for some time.



SESSION THREE



3 INSIDE OUT

—who belongs and who doesn't

Aims: ● to explore the effects of feeling included or excluded by communities

- to become aware that there are possibilities and dangers in the church's attempt to become a close-knit community

Beginnings and For discussion should be omitted when using radio

BEGINNINGS

- a **IN THE GROUP** Make a list of some of the groups of people or institutions that you know. Which of these do you think would call themselves "communities"?

Take **three** of these and discuss what it feels like to be on the **inside** of them, and what they look like from the **outside**.

- b **IN PAIRS** Make a list of what you would expect to find in an ideal community. Stop if you reach **ten**!
- c **IN THE GROUP** Look at the list of communities that the group made under a. Which of them comes closest to the lists that the pairs drew up in b? Talk about the one that seems the closest and the one that seems the farthest from the ideal.

doesn't even seem to be an opposite to the word "community". This suggests it is common to think of communities as "good" things, even if in real life they may not be. Community is used as a positive word, so that mental patients are moved from institutions into the community, from somewhere that is seen as uncaring to somewhere that is supposed to be warm and welcoming.

Real life may be different. A hospital can be an institution in which patients feel safe and in which they have a place; it is a community. The so-called outside community can be seen as hostile and dangerous, as it often is for people who have just come out of mental hospital. Or to quote someone in prison, "The real prison for me is the outside. In here I'm warm and I get fed." It seems that there are two places from which to look at communities; from inside and from outside.

The more shared experience a community has, the more those in it feel a sense of belonging. Even if the experience is very hard, like it is for communities who are struggling with being poor and deprived, there is a sense of solidarity, of being together. To go back to an idea in Session One, everyone shares the same frame. They see things in the same way. The danger is that the stronger the sense of community, the more difficult it is for outsiders to feel accepted within that community.

FOR DISCUSSION

In a book called *Keywords*, Raymond Williams says that "community", unlike other words that describe collections of people such as "state", "nation", or "society", never seems to be used as a "bad" word. There

In the same way, the more a local church becomes a group of people who know each other very well, the harder it will be for new people to break in. The same is true if part of a group has a common experience which binds it together, but which leaves others feeling left out. This is the problem of the "in-group".

The building up of communities (political, social, religious, domestic, etc.) is full of opportunity and danger. For all those included, there will be a number excluded. Some people even seem to exclude themselves and become "drop-outs". Perhaps it is worth reflecting whether it is possible to have a community of outsiders.



BRINGING IT HOME

- a **IN PAIRS** Describe to your partner the community to which you feel you **most** belong. Who is "in" and who is "out" of that community?

Then describe a community from which you feel you have been excluded.

- b **IN THE GROUP** Say as much as you want of your discussion in pairs.
- c **IN THE GROUP** Does your local church congregation feel like a community? Who belongs to it, and who feels excluded from it?



A BIBLE VIEW

- a One person reads aloud the following verses:

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. ²There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way.

Luke 19.1-4

Another reads aloud:

A crowd of people has gathered around Jesus. Zacchaeus is outside, up a tree, looking down and looking in.

IN TWO SUB-GROUPS

Group A represents Zacchaeus. They should stand outside the room in which the session is taking place (in the hall or the kitchen) and imagine what it is like to be Zacchaeus at this stage in the story. Talk to each other about what it feels like.

Group B represents the crowd. They stay in the session room and imagine what it feels like to be the crowd at this point in the story. Talk to each other about these feelings.



- b **Somebody** reads aloud the following verses, so that **both** groups can hear:

⁵When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, "Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today."

⁶Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. ⁷All the people who saw it started grumbling, "This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!"

⁸Zacchaeus 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 him back four times as much."

⁹Jesus said to him, "Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19. 5-10

Another reads aloud:

Jesus looks up and sees Zacchaeus. He calls him, and Zacchaeus responds, making haste to come down. Jesus and Zacchaeus go together to Zacchaeus' house. Zacchaeus is overwhelmed, and offers to give away half of all he has to the poor, and to pay back those he has cheated four times over. By doing this, Zacchaeus is recognizing that he has a responsibility to a community beyond himself. Jesus does not take him up on this but says simply that **today** salvation has come to this house. Jesus reminds Zacchaeus that he belongs to the community by saying that he too is a son of Abraham.

Groups A and B now change places

Group A Imagine what it is like to be Zacchaeus at this stage in the story. Talk to each other about what it feels like.

Group B Imagine what it is like to be the crowd at this stage in the story. Look at the text to see what is said. Talk to each other about what it feels like.

- c **IN THE GROUP** Discuss the experiences that the two groups had.

SOMETHING TO DO

It is sometimes said that we exclude those people who most remind us of what we find hardest to accept. This is true of both individuals and communities. Spend some time as a group discussing whether this might be true of the communities to which you belong. What action could you take to do something about it?

"As Jesus taught, so he lived. His acceptance of the unacceptable was a deliberate doing of what he saw the Father doing. His meals shared with sinners and outcasts were a reflection of his own perception of God as a father who prepares a feast to welcome his erring son. The whole motley crowd that sat around him as he taught were his brothers and sisters and his mother, because they were his Father's children."

Weep not for me, John V Taylor



TO PRAY

Sit for a few moments in silence, thinking about all those who are excluded from communities to which they would like to belong.

Say together (or sing) the hymn, *Just as I am*

JUST as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come.

AT HOME

Jesus often went out of his way to welcome those whom others rejected. Luke records that the first people who visited him as a baby were outcasts, shepherds.

Decide who you are going to go out of your way to welcome during the week; to your family, to your church, to your group at work.

The experience of your group in this series of studies may well result in an "in-group". How can you share the experience of the group with others?



SESSION FOUR



4 *LITTLE AND LARGE*

—think wide, act local

Aim: ● to explore the tension that exists in living and acting both locally and globally

Beginnings and *For discussion* should be omitted when using radio



BEGINNINGS

a **ON YOUR OWN** Write a list of the ten items that are most often on your household shopping list. (If you don't do the shopping make a list of the food you most often eat.) Beside each item, write the name of the country or countries it comes from.

b **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CASE-STUDY**

You live in a small new housing development on the edge of a town. There is some land set aside for community facilities; shops, a doctor's surgery, a bank, a school. A very large supermarket chain has offered to build a superstore on the site. It will sell mostly foodstuffs. There will be a community room provided, but nothing else.

If a superstore is built, it will provide employment for people in the area, but other facilities that are needed will not be provided. It will attract shoppers from far and wide, away from the small shops in the centre of town.

Form four groups. They represent:

- The local community
- The store owners
- The Chamber of Commerce from the local town
- The Consumers' Council

Each group list the arguments that they would put forward from their point of view for or against the building of the superstore. Put the lists up beside each other and read them aloud without any comment.



FOR DISCUSSION

If you are asked to give your address, the number of your house, the road and the town, and perhaps the county, is usually enough—not forgetting the postcode. A child will sometimes add country, continent, world, galaxy, and universe, as if to emphasize that people live in an endless series of different worlds, all of a different size. Most of the time, these worlds seem to be in harmony, and if there is a clash, it seems to be far away. The price of a pint of milk on the doorstep and the Common Market Agricultural Policy seem to have no connection. And people starving in the Third World seem to be even further away.

Even our shopping takes us into other worlds. Look at the list you drew up at the beginning of this session, and you will see that the countries which provide our shopping items are very many. The simple activity of shopping can lead to us having to take account of all sorts of issues. Some people refuse to buy anything from South Africa because they disapprove of its policy of apartheid. Others worry that workers on tea plantations see very little of the money that gets paid for tea, or that the change from making sugar from sugar-beet rather than sugar-cane has damaged the economies of Caribbean countries.

Whether we like it or not, the world in which we live is much bigger than the little local world we are aware of most of the time. To think even at a national level is to think too small. What appears to be good for us in this country is not necessarily good for people in other countries. There are many examples that illustrate the problem. Here are some you may want to think about:

- I want to park outside my house, but other people want to drive safely through my road.
- It is more convenient to have a local Cottage Hospital than to drive to the nearest General Hospital.
- We need jobs for people locally, but if these jobs produce arms to be sold to the Third World, then local need clashes with the wider need for peace.
- The smoke from factories that provide us with goods falls as acid rain elsewhere.
- Forests are cut down to satisfy local need and the planet suffers.

The issues are very complicated, and not easily resolved. Decisions made now can even affect future generations.



BRINGING IT HOME

- a **IN PAIRS** List as many examples as you can think of where there is a conflict between local and wider needs. These may be in the area of family, or work, or leisure; they can be local, or be national or international.

IN THE GROUP Tell each other what you have written. Choose one issue from the lists that affects your own community. Repeat the superstore case-study exercise with this issue. Who are the interested parties? (Remember to think as widely as you can.) How does your faith help you to understand and find possible solutions to the problem?

A BIBLE VIEW

Read aloud the passage below:

25 A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

26 Jesus answered him, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

27 The man answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'"

28 "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this and you will live."

29 But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

30 Jesus answered, "There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half



dead.³¹ It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side.³² In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity.³⁴ He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.'"

36 And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?"

37 The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him."

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."

Luke 10.25-37

The people in the story that Jesus told include

- a robber
- the priest
- the Levite
- the Samaritan
- the injured man
- the innkeeper

Members of the group each take the part of one of the people in the story. You may need to ask one or two members to be the same character. Prepare to tell the story from their point of view. They then tell their story in the above order.

IN THE GROUP Discuss what came out of the stories as they were told. As a result of the stories, what do you think the title of the original story could be? (To give an example, it was well known that the Jerusalem to Jericho road was very dangerous, and that it was unwise to travel alone. Some people would say that the injured man did not take enough care, and that was why he was attacked. So the title might be, "The stupid traveller".)

If you think that is stupid, think what people say about women who go out alone and then are attacked.



SOMETHING TO DO

Jesus told the original story in answer to a question from the lawyer—"Who is my neighbour?" The story changed the frame of the question. It was no longer a theoretical question, but one that was taken onto the open road. The Samaritan was the neighbour to the man who was robbed. That means that the Samaritan might be my neighbour, and I might be his. But the lawyer found that he couldn't mention the word "Samaritan" at the end of the story. He could not bring himself to believe that a hated Samaritan could actually be a neighbour.

Are there Samaritans in your world, local or global? Are there groups whose names you cannot say, who don't count? As a group, identify them. The group may discover that it has neighbours, both near and far, that it has never recognized before. The group should try to find a way of caring for these neighbours.

TO PRAY

Spend some minutes in silence. Who are the people you find it difficult to think of as neighbours, local or global? Each person name one of them out loud.

Watch or listen to a broadcast news programme. (If it's not the right time of day to do this, read part of a newspaper.) Who are the neighbours shown there? Add them to your prayers.



SAY TOGETHER

Open our eyes, Lord, to our world and the other worlds around us. Help us to discover how we can love you and love our neighbour as ourselves, even when the needs of our neighbour clash with ours.

AT HOME

Don't forget to fill in your diary for this session. Once people begin to see the link between local and global affairs, taking some form of action becomes almost inevitable. It's the only way to demonstrate real love and concern. But in order to act it is important to know a good deal about the issue.

Find an issue that you want to know more about. Investigate it. Consider what loving your neighbour might mean in practice in relation to the issue. Then decide what you can do about it.

Bring your diary to the next session. It will be your record of what you have discovered over the weeks. You and the other members of the group will be able to compare what you have learned.



SESSION FIVE



5 BE SEEING YOU

—what has changed in the way we see things?

Aims: ● to look back over the previous sessions

- to explore the ways in which attitudes have changed towards God, other people, other churches, and the world
- to look forward and to make plans for the future

Beginnings and For discussion should be omitted when using radio

BEGINNINGS

ON YOUR OWN Think back over the past four sessions. Reflect on any changes that have taken place for you and for the group during the sessions.

Have labels changed, or been changed?

Have you gained any new insight about your place in your family, or how you feel about not having one?

Have there been any changes in the way you think about the places to which you belong, and about where you feel you do not belong?

How do you see your place in the world now? Have there been ways in which you have been able to think globally and act locally?

How do you see the other churches now?

Has your picture of God changed?

IN PAIRS Talk about what you have discovered.

FOR DISCUSSION

Most of the time people take the way they see completely for granted. At a physical level, those who can see are not aware how much they depend on it. It is only when their sight is affected in some way that people realize how important it is. At another level, people assume that everyone sees exactly what they see and in the way that they see it. For example, adults assume that children see exactly what they see, and forget that the kitchen table looks huge to a toddler.

The way people see depends on all kinds of things. This is true of both types of seeing, seeing **with** our eyes and seeing **through** our eyes. If we go out with an expert in any subject, whether it is local history, wild flowers, buildings or trains, we are helped to learn what to look for and where to look. We begin to notice things we missed before, and we begin to interpret what we see. We see more than we even knew was there. A different kind of seeing may take place within us, and when we see things differently it changes the way we relate to those things.

But this change can never be forced—it just happens. It is a gift, or a “spin-off” from doing something else. It feels as though the “frame” of the picture has been so changed that we are



looking at a different view. This change in the way of seeing is one way of understanding the experience of "conversion". It is one way of describing the discovery of "faith". A moving example of this can be seen in an incident in the life of Leonard Wilson, who was Bishop of Singapore when it was captured during the Second World War. He was taken prisoner and tortured.

"I looked at their faces as they stood around and took it in turn to flog, and their faces were hard and cruel and some of them were obviously enjoying their cruelty. But by the grace of God I saw those men not as they were, but as they had been. Once they were little children playing with their brothers and sisters and happy in their parents' love. It is hard to hate little children; but even that was not enough. There came into my mind, as I lay on the table, the words of that communion hymn:

Look, Father, look on his
anointed face,
And only look on us as found in
him . . .
For lo' between our sins and their
reward
We set the Passion of Thy
Son our Lord."

This change in the way of seeing can come suddenly and dramatically, but it can also come gradually. It is sometimes much later that we become aware that our point of view, our way of seeing, has changed. This happens not only to individuals, but also to groups and communities. Looking back, it is sometimes hard to believe that people could ever have believed what they did believe. Is there any Christian today who would defend slavery? Does anyone today feel the weight of the arguments used by those who were against women voting? It was thought not very long ago that groups of people meeting together from different churches was a dreadful thing.

BRINGING IT HOME

ON YOUR OWN Think about the times in your life when you have seen things in a new way. This may have taken place suddenly or gradually.

IN PAIRS Tell of these experiences.

IN THE GROUP Think about ways in which there has been a change in the way of seeing in a group, community, church or nation. When did the change begin?

A BIBLE VIEW

Read this passage aloud. It may seem strange to look at an Easter story during Lent, but it can tell us a great deal about conversion and change.



13 On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened.¹⁵ As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them;¹⁶ they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him.¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?"

They stood still, with sad faces.¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?"

19 "What things?" he asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did.²⁰ Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified.²¹ And we had hoped that he would be the one

who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened.²² Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb,²³ but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive.²⁴ Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him."

25 Then Jesus said to them, "How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said!²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?"

²⁷ And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther;²⁹ but they held him back, saying, "Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark." So he went in to stay with them.³⁰ He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.³² They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

33 They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others³⁴ and saying, "The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!"

35 The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread.

Luke 24: 13-35

Imagine you are Cleopas or the other person. At each indicated point in the story write down the answers to these questions:

- What did you feel?
- What did you believe?
- What did you want to do?

—leaving Jerusalem
—standing still
—while the stranger was talking
—when you invited the stranger in
—when the stranger broke the bread
—when the stranger vanished
—when you got back to Jerusalem

Discuss your answers, first with a partner and then with the group.

The story of the walk to Emmaus is the longest description of a single incident in the four gospels. It is possible to read it **with** our eyes, simply as an account of what happened to friends of Jesus on a particular road at a particular time. It may be that Luke has made the story so long and included so much detail because he means us to read it **through** our eyes, not just **with** our eyes. If we see it in that way, it can become a parable of the Christian life. Sometimes life seems to have no meaning, hopes are dashed, dreams trampled on. People don't want to go on. They can't see under the surface of events. Although God is walking with them, God is not known and recognized.

Once the disciples realize who Jesus is they see the earlier conversation on the road in a different light. The God who was recognized inside in the breaking of the bread, had been with them outside in the stranger on the road. His understanding had become their understanding.

Their response is to retrace their steps to share their discovery with others. The response to the good news is always to want to share it.



SOMETHING TO DO

What are you going to do as a result of these five sessions? It would be good if there was a result at three levels:

- as an individual
- as part of a group drawn from different churches
- as a group within a community

ON YOUR OWN Decide on one action you are going to take as a result of these five sessions. This might be in any of the areas that you have been discussing; in your relationship with your family, your community, the world, and with God.

IN A PAIR Discuss your proposed action and agree to meet in one month and find out if it has been done.

IN THE GROUP List all the things the group might do to help the churches in your area grow together. Choose **one** of them to

do as a group. List what the group might do within the local community. Choose **one** of those things to do as a group.

Choose something you will be able to achieve. But agree to meet again in three months to check on progress.

It is impossible to say definitely what groups should do. But it is important that something should happen as a result of these discussions, otherwise it has just been a meeting of an in-group who want to keep their discoveries, and their faith, to themselves. Think again about how you are going to share what you have learned with your local congregation, or with people on the fringe of, or outside of, the churches altogether.



TO PRAY

11 “The command that I am giving you today is not too difficult or beyond your reach.¹² It is not up in the sky. You do not have to ask, ‘Who will go up and bring it down for us, so that we can hear it and obey it?’¹³ Nor is it on the other side of the ocean. You do not have to ask, ‘Who will go across the ocean and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?’¹⁴ No, it is here with you. You know it and can quote it, so now obey it.”

Deuteronomy 30. 11-14

Spend some time in silence thinking about the ways in which during these sessions you have thought about God. What labels do you put on God? What does being part of God's family mean? Is God part of your community? How local or world-wide is your God?

Each person say out loud something they want to say to God as a result of their thoughts.

Join hands and say the Lord's Prayer together.

Some groups may also like to say this together:



“Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you! For behold you were within me, and I outside; and I sought you outside and in my ugliness fell upon those lovely things that you have made. You were with me and I was not with you. I was kept from you by those things, yet had they not been in you, they would not have been at all. You called and cried to me and broke open my deafness: you breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now pant for you: I tasted you and now hunger and thirst for you: you touched me, and I have burned for your peace.”

Confessions Book 10, Augustine

AT HOME

Write your diary for the session and use it in your prayers. Make sure you begin to do all those things you decided on. And pray for the members of your group.



NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

There is an audio cassette produced to accompany this book. It gives suggestions about how best to lead groups, examples of an actual group working on the material, and offers ways of incorporating any local radio material. The following notes are intended as a simple guide.

- 1 The material is designed to be used by a **group of eight to ten people**, with one or two leaders. If the group is much larger than ten, there is not enough opportunity for everyone to contribute. If it is much smaller than eight, then it is difficult for individuals to "take a breather" and think about things. There is a "critical mass" for a group. Once a group reaches that size, it generates its own energy. If it is too small, it needs energy put into it by the leader. Each of the five sessions is designed to last **two hours**.

It may be that you will not have enough time to do everything in two hours. Don't worry too much about this. Decide what you will leave out before the meeting if necessary. Be sure to leave enough time to do the *Bible view* and *Something to do* parts of the session. Try to decide how much time you will spend on each part of the session. This will help you to run the session smoothly. You will also be able to tell when to move on or miss something out.

- 2 The method used by the writers means that the quality of leadership is vital. Don't be frightened by that. Your job, as a leader, is to help the group through the material. **You don't have to know all the answers.** Trust the group and trust the people in it. You will be surprised how much will come out of the session. If you try to control the group, tell it what to think, then the mixture (of the book, the

group, any radio material and, of course, God) won't work. The mixture is rich. The group may sometimes want to stop and digest for a bit.

- 3 Part of the job of the leader is to make sure that the "boundaries" of the group are safe. Some of these boundaries are practical. Let everyone know **where** you are going to meet, and for **how long**. **Start and finish** on time, or if you are going to go on after the finishing time, allow those who want to go to leave without feeling guilty. Make sure people are **warm** enough, and sitting in **comfortable** chairs so that they can all **see** each other. Have available **paper** (large sheets of newsprint or wallpaper, and small sheets), **pens** (felt-tips and ordinary) and **Bibles** (or ask people to bring one).

Some of the boundaries are of a different kind. A group works best if everyone knows everyone else's name, if they're clear about the purpose of the group, and how it is going to work. Your job is not necessarily to be the only person with ideas about these boundaries, but to make sure that the group is clear.

- 4 The material for each session is divided into seven sections:

BEGINNINGS

Something for the group to do that will get everyone involved.

FOR DISCUSSION

A short written piece that sketches out the area with which the session is dealing. It is not supposed to be "the last word", but is meant to prompt discussion. Read this out loud, 45

when the fact that people read at different speeds doesn't matter.

Alternatively, the above two sections can be replaced by radio broadcast. If your group is going to use material from local radio, omit these two sections. Following the radio broadcast, go straight to the next section.

BRINGING IT HOME

This draws the general discussion of the previous sessions to focus on the particular concerns of your group.

A BIBLE VIEW

A Bible study to help people "get inside" the story, to see things from the point of view of the people in the story. Make sure that the story is **read** out loud first. Stories were made for hearing.

SOMETHING TO DO

This is designed to help the group discover an application of what it has been working on.

TO PRAY

Worship and prayer are an essential part of the process, not an optional extra.

AT HOME

Work for group members to do between the sessions.

Don't forget to make a rough plan of how long you will spend on each section, and keep an eye on the time.

- 5 The group is asked to work in four different ways:

ON YOUR OWN People working alone, thinking and making notes.

IN PAIRS This gives an opportunity for everyone to say something. Shy people will be helped to say things that they are frightened of saying in front of everyone.

IN SUB-GROUPS The group divides into two or three to work on something in particular. This is used especially in the *Bible view* section.

IN THE GROUP Everyone together.

You may find that some groups prefer to stay together all the time. This will have two effects. The session will take longer, and quiet people will find it harder to make their contribution.

- 6 **Basic rules** It might be worth making sure that everyone agrees on these at the start:

- **Everyone's** contribution is important
- Everyone has the right to be listened to **without interruption**
- No one has the right to talk for ever
- People are allowed to be private and don't have to "tell all"
- What is said in the group session, particularly by individuals, is not talked about outside the group without permission

THE AUTHORS

This material has been written by a small group who originally all lived and worked in Hampshire. They have been working together for some years to produce study material for use at a local level. Their particular interest is in stories, and the ways in which links can be made between the stories in the Bible and people's own stories. Hence the odd name they have chosen for themselves, The Tale-tellers.

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The material was edited by Wendy S Robins



WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU?

This book will help you find out. It asks us to tell our own stories and place them alongside five stories from Luke's Gospel. Through this, we are helped to see how our faith relates to our world today.

The five session topics have been chosen in response to the needs expressed by those who took part in an earlier programme for Lent 86. They focus on how people can relate their daily life to their faith in God, and how this affects the way they relate to other people.

Written as part of the *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* Inter-Church Process, the book has been designed for use during Lent 88 in conjunction with local radio, but can be used independently at any time.

Use it and find out more about yourselves and others, both inside and outside the Church.



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