



**In it Together - Reflections on the Stuff of Life
Women in Action**

Hi everyone. My name is Jo and I've been asked to write a short monthly reflection for Women of Action. I worship at Hampden View in Sheffield and have only recently become part of this amazing group of women who seek to make life better for others.

These monthly devotions will be short – and will hopefully help as we discern together what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the 21st Century. We are 'followers of The Way' – and are 'in it together'. It is 'our turn' to continue the work of those who have gone before us.

But what does that actually look like, especially for a dispersed group of women from a variety of different churches, backgrounds, places and stories? One thing is for sure, our story matters. Where we have come from – where we find ourselves today, and the plan God has for us moving into the 'tomorrows' that await – it all matter. Your story and your song matter.

So come on in – let go together!

LOST THINGS

In Luke's Gospel there are a collection of 'lost stories' (Luke 15:1-32) – Parables relating to 'lost things'. A parable is a story that *points to something far deeper* – a deeper meaning that we can dive in and be washed afresh with. We have a lost animal, lost people and a lost 'inanimate' object (the coin in case you are wondering). I'm not going to launch into a Bible study here – but please do read these stories afresh if you can.

In each of these three 'Missing' stories – people and relationships are affected. There are questions, emotions, fears, worries and joys. We can relate to them all in some way.

This is another parable, the '**Parable of the Lost Horse**'.

Firstly, Do you remember 1982?

A little recap - Unemployment reached 3,000,000 (the highest since the 1930's), the Queen celebrated her 'Pearl Jubilee', the Falklands War, bombings in London by the Provisional IRA, the Mary Rose was raised and Prince William arrived! Look at him now! Time certainly does fly. In a blink of an eye, that was 41 years ago.

What were you doing in 1982?

Who did you spend time with? Where did you live?

What were your hopes? Fears? Dreams? What did you worry about then?

Was it worth the worry? Has your faith changed, grown, perhaps even weakened since then? Are you still at the same Church, or have you experienced the bereavement of closure – and then new beginnings? Have era's ended and new ones begun?

Do you look back with rose tinted spectacles? Are things better or worse now?

In 1982 I was 7 and I had a big worry. I had lost my favourite horse. 'Chestnut' I had all manner of animals – All plastic. All beautiful. All loved.

I would spread them out on the grass and the horses would be in a beautifully and carefully designed paddock made out of bits of sticks, the pigs were in the pig sty, where I made my very own mud – and I even had tiny little people who I set to work. Then.... It happened. My favourite horse was gone. It was a dark brown colour with a black mane. A magnificent plastic beast in all its triumphant farm finery. And it was gone. I had no idea where – 'Chestnut' was just gone.

Life went on.

I forgot about the lost horse. Different priorities took over. As I got older, the farm was boxed up and put in the loft. I became a teenager (apologies to my parents for what I put them through).... I left home and life as an adult no longer needed the collection of plastic animals hidden away in the loft at my parents. In fact, I forgot about them. All of them. Including my favourite, and lost horse 'Chestnut'.

40 years later on a visit to my parents I was told there was a 'surprise' waiting for me.

You have guessed it. The lost was found. Found by my mum when she was digging over the garden. The same garden I found so much joy in as a child.

The same joy I had back then, and had somehow lost over the years – a child-like joy came over me – Chestnut – no longer brown with a black mane – now a brilliant white. The years had not changed Chestnut quite as much as the years had changed me. Chestnut was in essence, still the same, and could still provide the sense of enjoyment – just as before. I was different now – grown up – but there was something that still drew me back to a time when life was less complicated and while the Falklands War and unemployment levels were the talk of the grown-ups – I was safe, in my garden, with Chestnut. And it was in that Garden I believe God watched me play and smiled.

That which was lost was found. I also got lost. And I was also found.

The difference between God and me = God never stops looking for the Lost...
and
God also will allow us to find again what we need to find, to remind us of the simple things.

You might not have lost a plastic horse, but there will be something that ‘takes you back’ – that helps you remember a time, a place – a distant memory.

God is a distant memory for many people. Perhaps something they may have ‘played with’ decades ago – ‘something’ they believe they no longer need. Someone once said, they had ‘grown out of needing God’.

God needs uncovering for people again. And maybe the time is here for us to really remind people of what they have lost. And that is a call to action.

Whether it be a sheep, a coin, or a person – God never gives up – and neither should we.



Chestnut