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Bath & Wells

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Everyone, Everywhere, Growing in Faith

Small group resource

Introduction

This resource is for those who want to explore further the themes of Everyone, Everywhere Growing in Faith in small groups.

We are sure you will have plenty of ideas and look forward to seeing the varied ways in which it gets used.

You may already have established small groups in your parish or benefice you may choose to gather some people to specifically do these sessions together.

Each session contains:

- A Bible reading
- An image or icon
- Five questions
- A prayer
- An action

We have used the New International version of the Bible throughout these sessions but we encourage you to look at other translations where helpful.

We suggest that you start each session with a time of prayer or silence.

Perhaps use this prayer:

God of love, we commit to share this time together exploring how we have and might grow in faith. Strengthen us when we feel discouraged and uncertain and help us to understand more fully who you are, so we might grow in our faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You might like to use the image/icon as a starting point for your session and consider some of the following questions:

- What do you notice?
- What do you like about the icon/image?
- What do you find difficult or challenging about the image?
- What, if anything, does the image show you about God?

Follow that by exploring the Bible reading(s) and questions together and consider how you might fulfil the action before you meet again.

Close your time together in prayer.

Share any of your ideas or questions with Cheryl Govier

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Growth

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4: 15-16

1. Growing in faith will mean different things to different people. Write down any words or phrases that come to mind. You might wish to share these together as a group.
2. What are some of the areas of everyday life where we pay attention to growth? (One example might be the attention we pay to the growth stages of a child.) Can any of these help us learn more about growing in faith?
3. Read the verses from Ephesians (chapter 4 verses 15 & 16). Make a note of any words that stand out for you and why. You might like to share these together as a group.
4. As individuals and as a community, how can we know we are growing in faith? What does it look like?
5. Reflect for a few minutes on how you would like to grow in faith. You might wish to share your thoughts with the group, or in pairs, and pray for each other, or to have a time of silent reflection.

A prayer

Lord God, help us to grow in faith. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into Him. Amen.

Something to try

What has your faith journey looked like?

Before your group next meets, draw or write down some key parts of your faith journey. The highs and the lows. You may like to do it as a graph, a map, words or pictures.

Take time to reflect on your journey and talk to God about it.

Rhythm

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1. What rhythms of life do you see in the world around you, in nature and in people?
2. Reading through the Bible passage, make a note of any words that stand out to you and why. What do you notice?
3. Thinking about your spiritual life, do you have a rhythm to it? Share your thoughts and experiences as a group.
4. We have rhythms in our individual lives but we also have them in our contexts and communities? What are some of the community rhythms you have that could help you to grow in faith?
5. Reflect for a few minutes on how you would like to develop a spiritual rhythm to help you grow in faith. For example, Morning/ Evening prayer etc? You might wish to share your thoughts with the group, or in pairs, and pray for each other, or to have a time of silent reflection.

A prayer

Lord God, help us to listen to the rhythm of your heart. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into him. Amen.

Something to try

Have a go at including a new spiritual rhythm into your daily life over the next week. It may involve going for a reflective walk, using a new tool such as Lectio 365 or choosing to serve in a new way either within your church context or in your community. Think about how it helps your faith growth and relationship with God.

Others

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

2 Thessalonians 1:3

1. Why are other people important for our personal faith growth?
2. Can you think of certain people who have helped you grow in your faith? How did they help you?
3. Read the Bible passage. What words or phrases stand out to you and why?
4. Can you think of examples in the Bible where someone has been helped to grow in their faith? E.g. Paul and Timothy, Zacchaeus.
5. It is normally quite easy to think about the people who have helped us on our walk of faith. How do you think you have helped others to grow in their faith? How might you do this more in the future? You might wish to share your thoughts with the group, or in pairs, and pray for each other, or to have a time of silent reflection.

A prayer

Lord God, help us to grow in faith with each other. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into Him. Amen.

Something to try

Take time to send a thank you message to someone who has been influential in growing your faith. You might like to send a card or a text message.

Word

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:12-13

1. The word of God is essential to our growth in faith, the gospels, for example, help us to get to know the person of Jesus and therefore what God is like. Which verses of Scripture have helped you grow in your faith?
2. Do you think that there is a relationship between our personal and communal growth in faith and the reading of God's word?
3. Do you think that the Bible can hinder our relationship with God? Has the Bible ever had a negative impact on your faith growth?
4. The Bible is the grand story of God revealed from Genesis through Revelation, it is the written word which reveals the living word. Read John 15:1-17 as a group and reflect on the passage thinking about your own faith growth, past, present and future?
5. How might you more intentionally use the Bible to help you grow in faith? You might wish to share your thoughts with the group, or in pairs, and pray for each other, or have a time of silent reflection.

A prayer

Lord God, help us to grow in faith through your word. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into Him. Amen.

Something to try

Spend some time remembering some of the Bible stories or verses that have inspired your faith growth. Pick one of them and read or listen to it every day this week. You might like to write or print it out and put it somewhere you will easily see throughout the week.

Together

When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 11:23-24

1. What group settings or communities have you been a part of which have enabled you to grow in faith? Are they church or non-church settings? Why do you think they have enabled you to grow in faith?
2. The above passage is an extract from the wider narrative about the church in Antioch. Read Acts 11:19-26. How did their togetherness enable them and others to grow in their faith?
3. Is there anything that you find hard about group settings that can negatively affect your faith growth?
4. What do you miss when you're not able to meet with your community whether church or non-church?
5. What opportunities are there for you to help grow your faith community and grow within it? You might wish to share your thoughts with the group, or in pairs, and pray for each other, or to have a time of silent reflection.

A prayer

Lord God, help us to grow in faith together. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into Him. Amen.

Something to try

Arrange to meet up with one or more people from a community that has helped you grow in your faith. If you don't feel you are a part of a community, why not spend time exploring what is on offer locally and consider joining somewhere new.

Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3-5

1. What part do you think hope plays in growing in faith?
2. Reflect on an experience of hope or of struggle with hope in your own life. Some people in your group might wish to share their experience. (If so, you might prefer as a group simply to 'hold' their story quietly without commenting on it).
3. Read one or more of these passages from Mark's gospel: Mark 8:31-38 (Jesus talks about his death and resurrection); Mark 9:3-10 (The Transfiguration); Mark 14:66-72 (Peter's denial). Can you see any connection or contrast between the episode(s) and 1 Peter 1:3-5?
4. Reread the verses from 1 Peter 1. Write down anything that stands out for you. Your group might wish to share ideas about taking growing in faith forward into the future.
5. What is the one thing you want to do next:
 - to deepen your faith and sense of connection to God
 - to grow in your faith

A prayer

Lord God, help us to grow in faith and hope. Draw us to ways in which we will grow as a community of faith, joined to each other in Christ, and growing into Him. Amen.

Something to try

Take some time to pray. Why not go around where you live and choose some objects to represent your faith journey. Then lay each one down by a candle or on a cloth as you say a prayer or keep some silence.

bathandwells.org.uk/everyday-faith-event



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