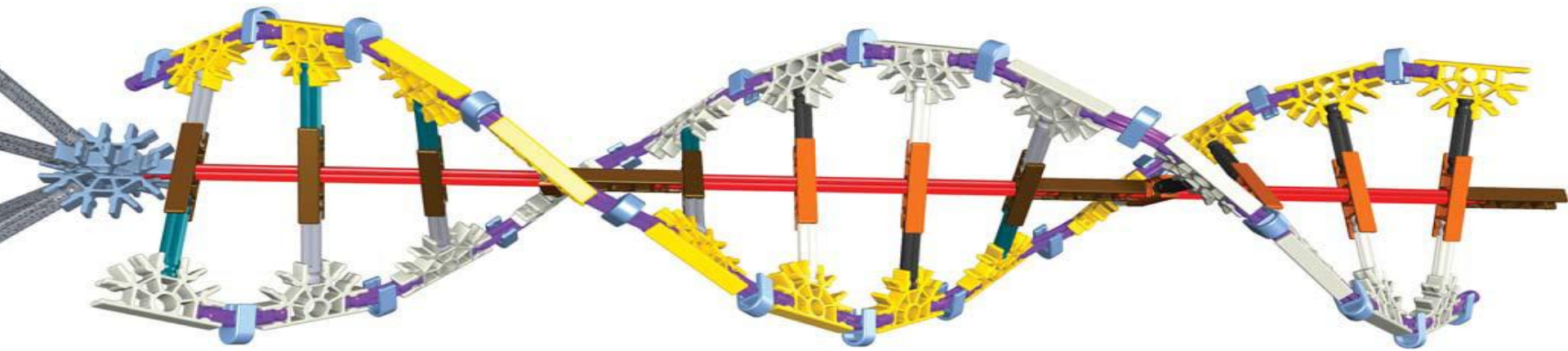


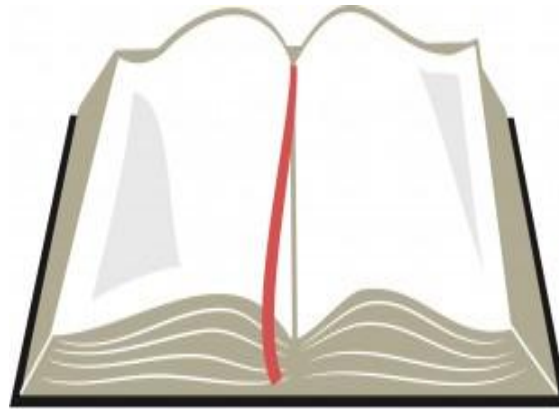
But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?  
Genesis 3:9



# Life: God: Church



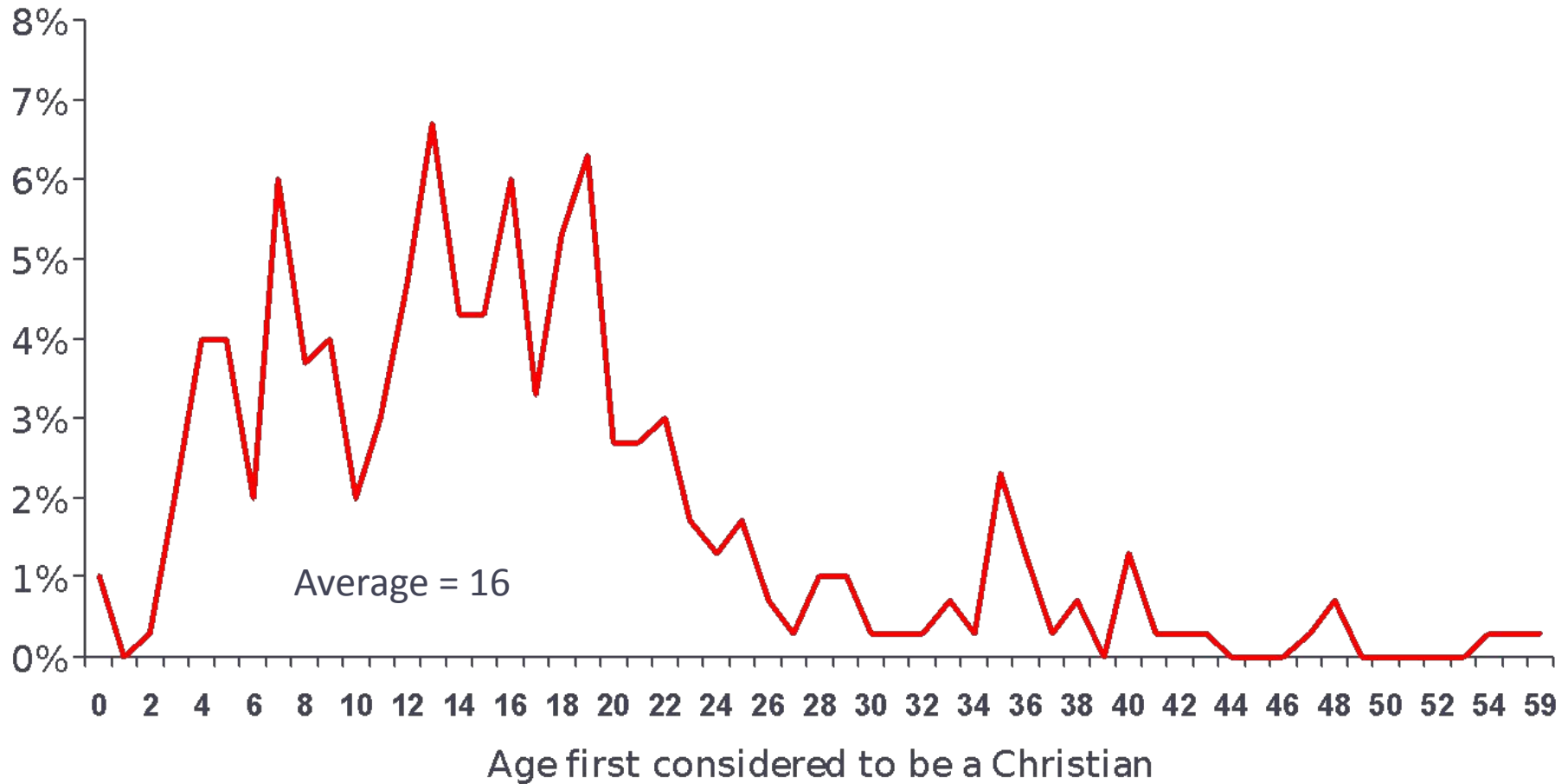
# What is a Christian?



**Q. How old where you when you  
first considered yourself to be a  
Christian?**

**»» Average age = 16**

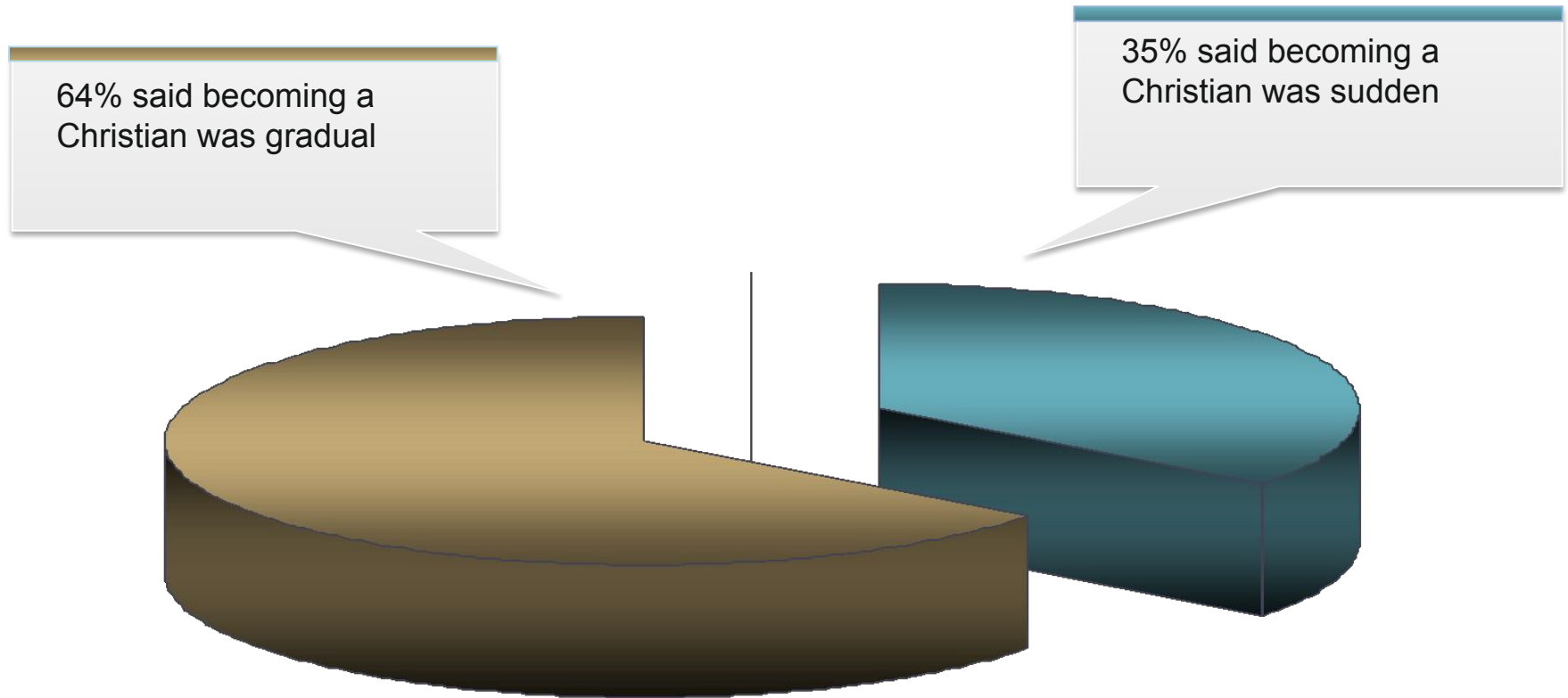
# Age first considered to be a Christian



**Q. Did you become a Christian suddenly or gradually?**

**»» 2 in 3 say it was gradual**

# For most people **it takes time**



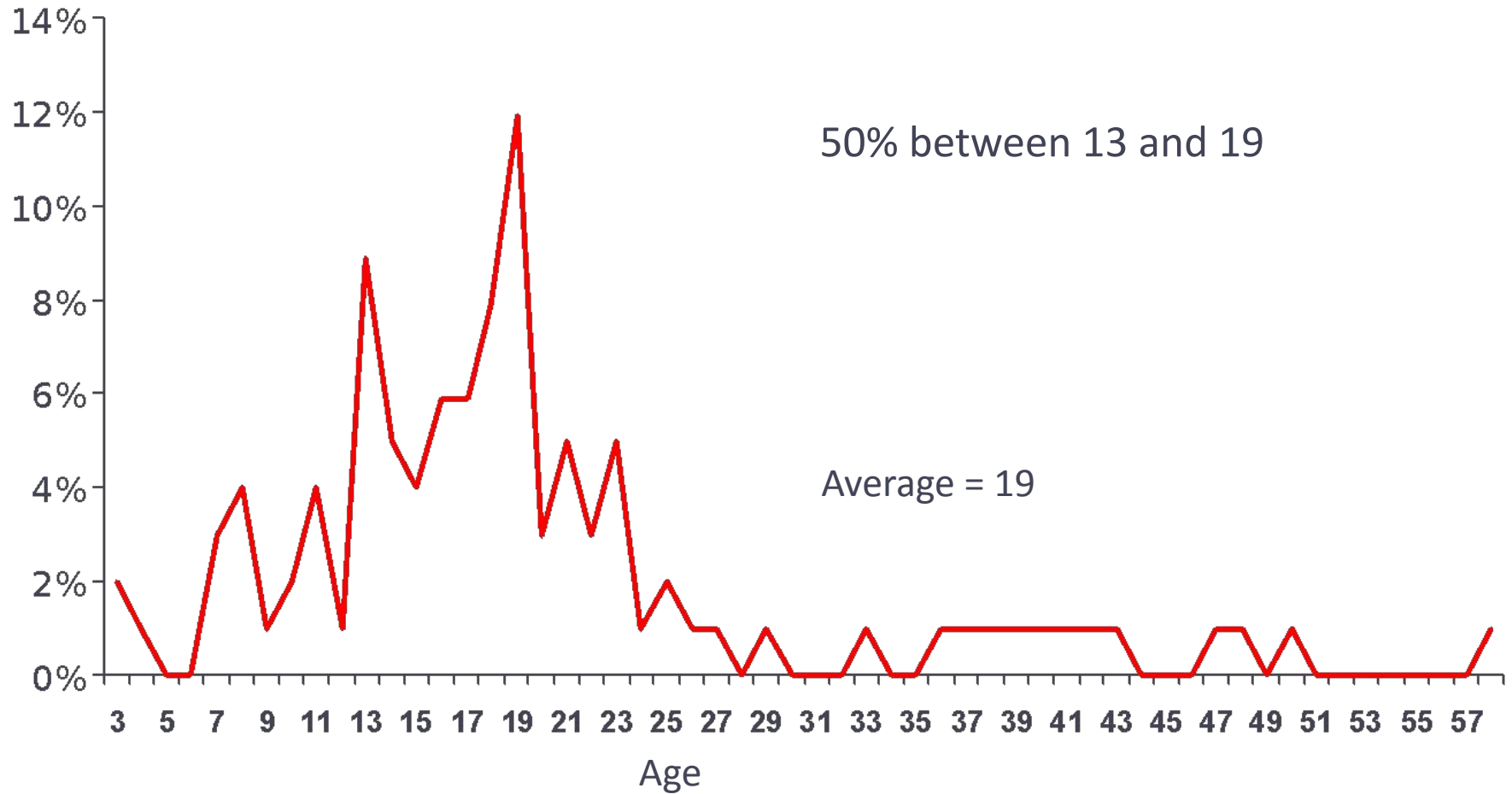
# Sudden experience

- Person is passive
- Emotional
- Change is
  - Dramatic
  - Profound
  - Permanent
- Behaviour follows belief





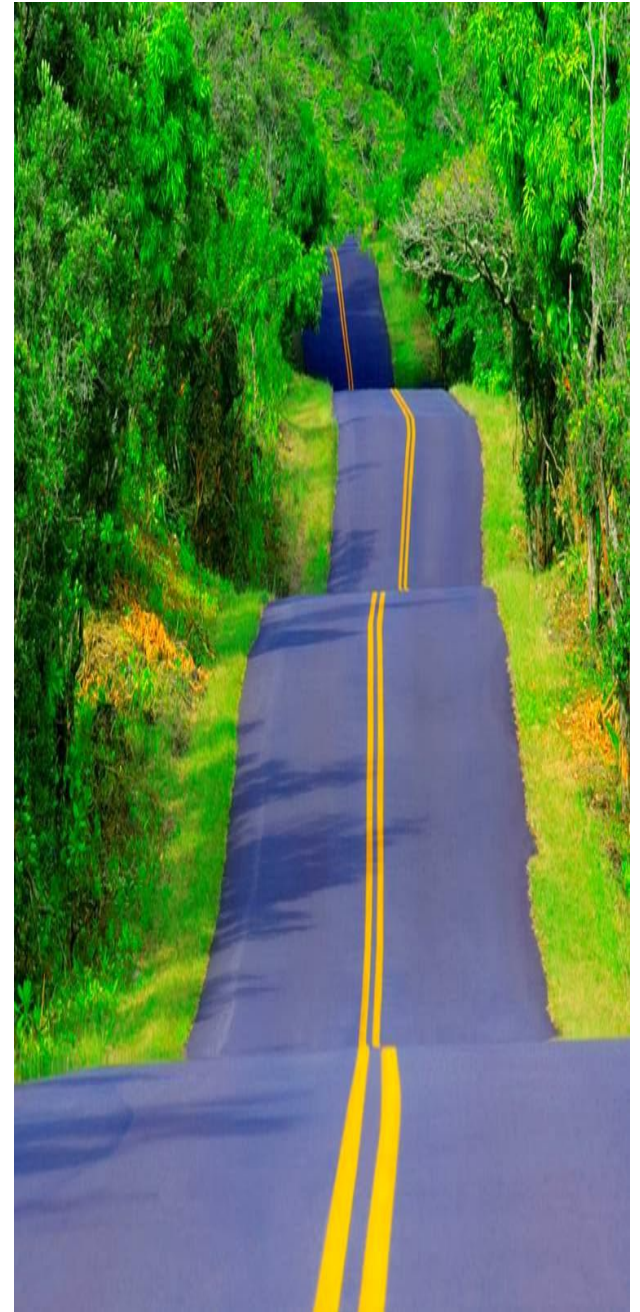
# Age of suddenly being a Christian



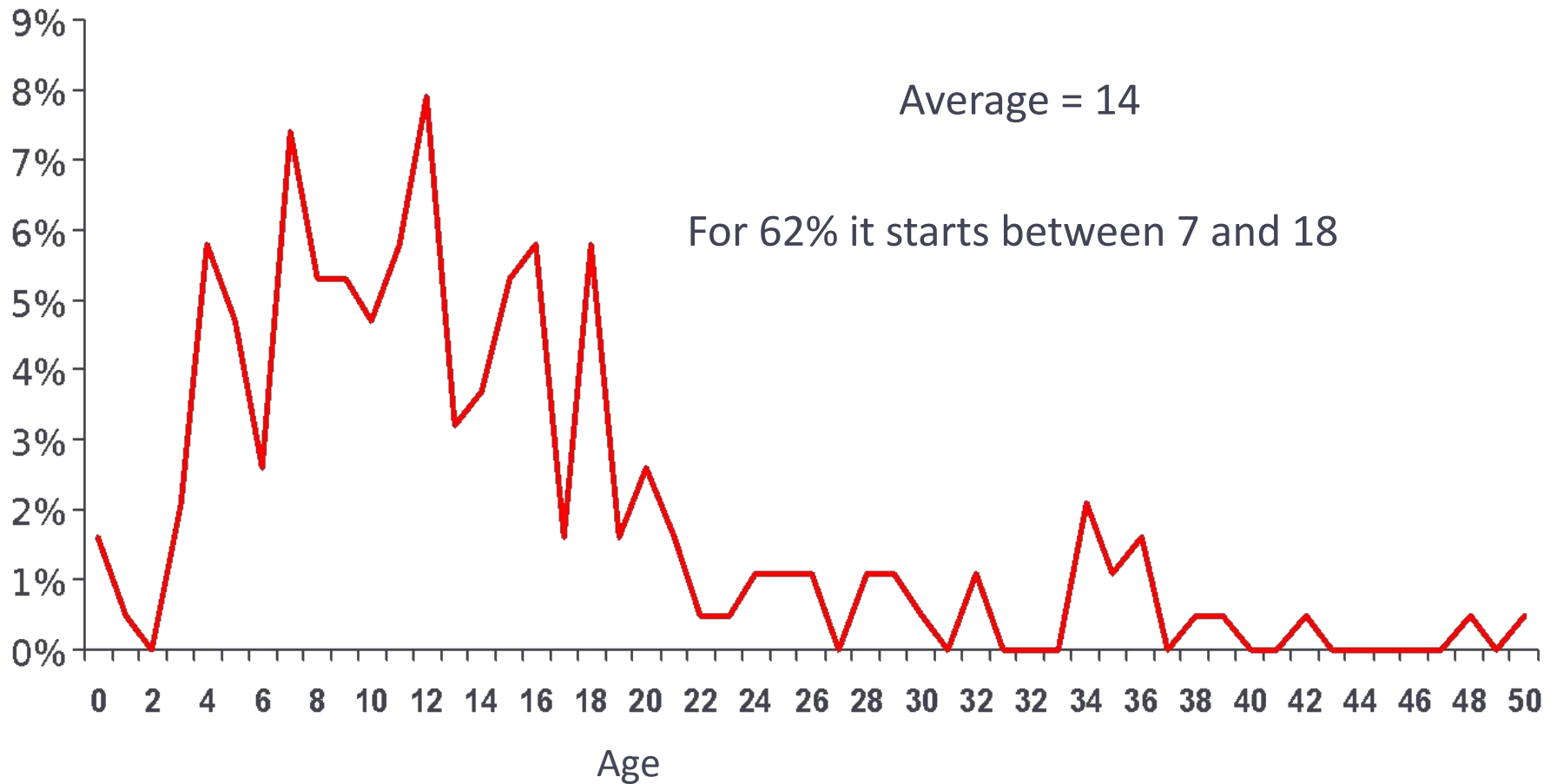


# Gradual

- Starts in adolescence
- Active
- More rational
- Belief follows behaviour
- Doubt and setbacks normal
- Takes many years  
... a lifetime



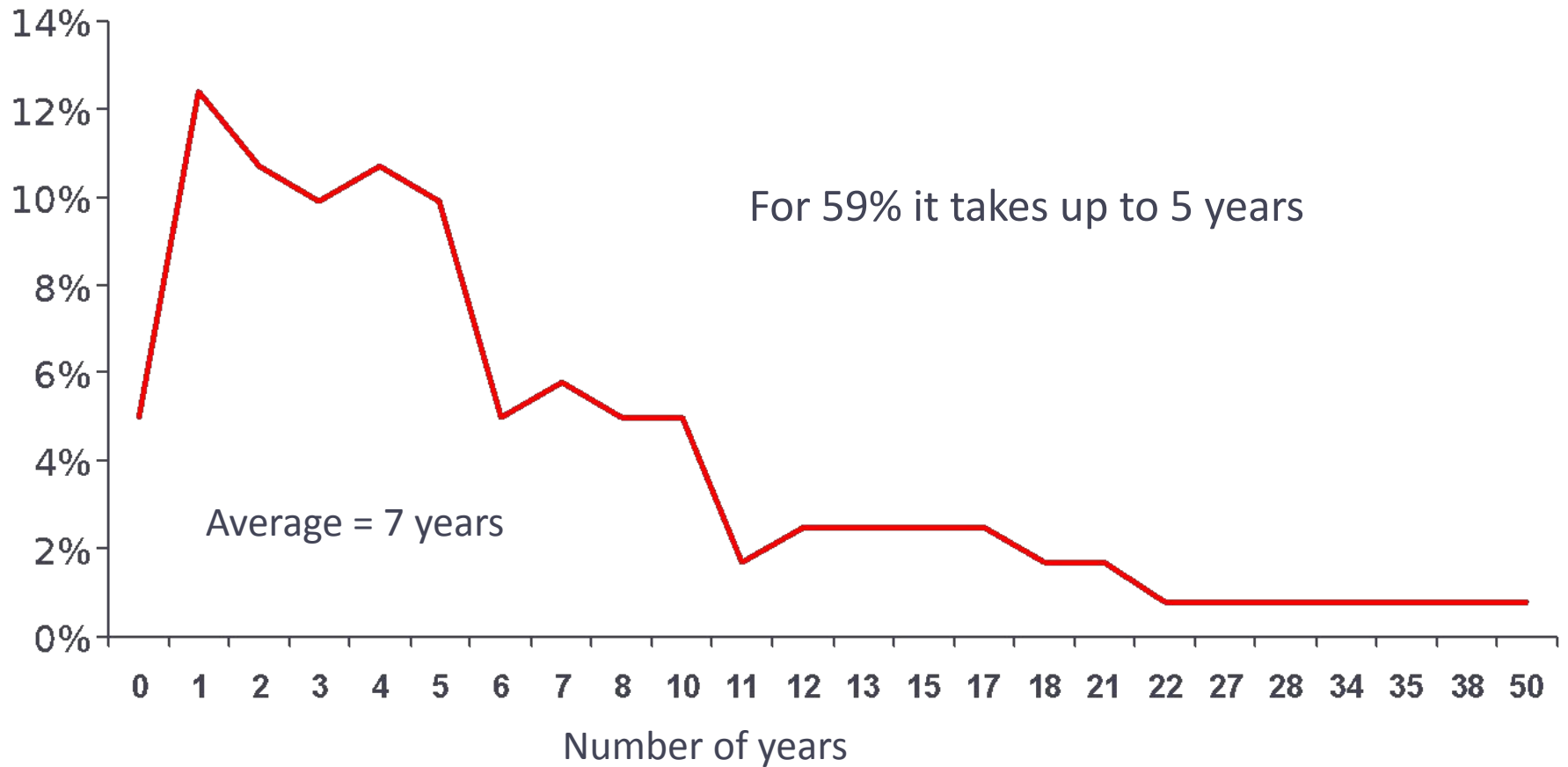
# Age at which the gradual journey starts



**Q. How long does a gradual journey  
take?**



# How long was the gradual journey?



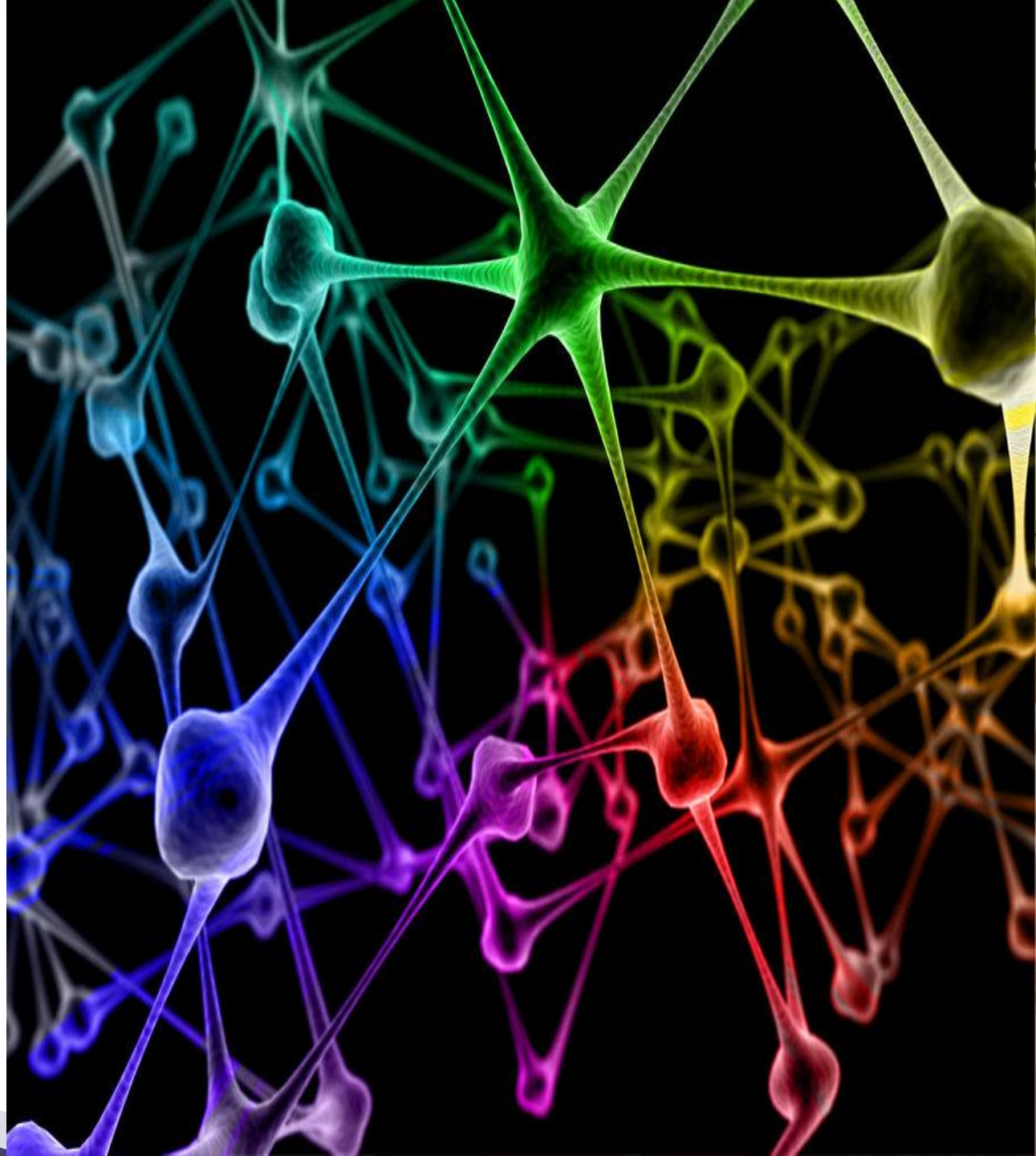
# Journeys are often a mix of sudden and gradual

- *The sense of always being part of the church, with gaps, colours this journey. I was part of the Christian family as long as I can remember but would begin to explore this through the promises of Scouting. After getting married and leaving home the attachment to the church was loosened but not to faith or God although it would begin to play less a part of life. So the basis of Christianity was gradual but around the age of 25 there was a sudden call to discipleship.*



# Faith Journeys

- Unique
- Complex
- Matrix of:
  - Influences
  - Motivations
  - Barriers

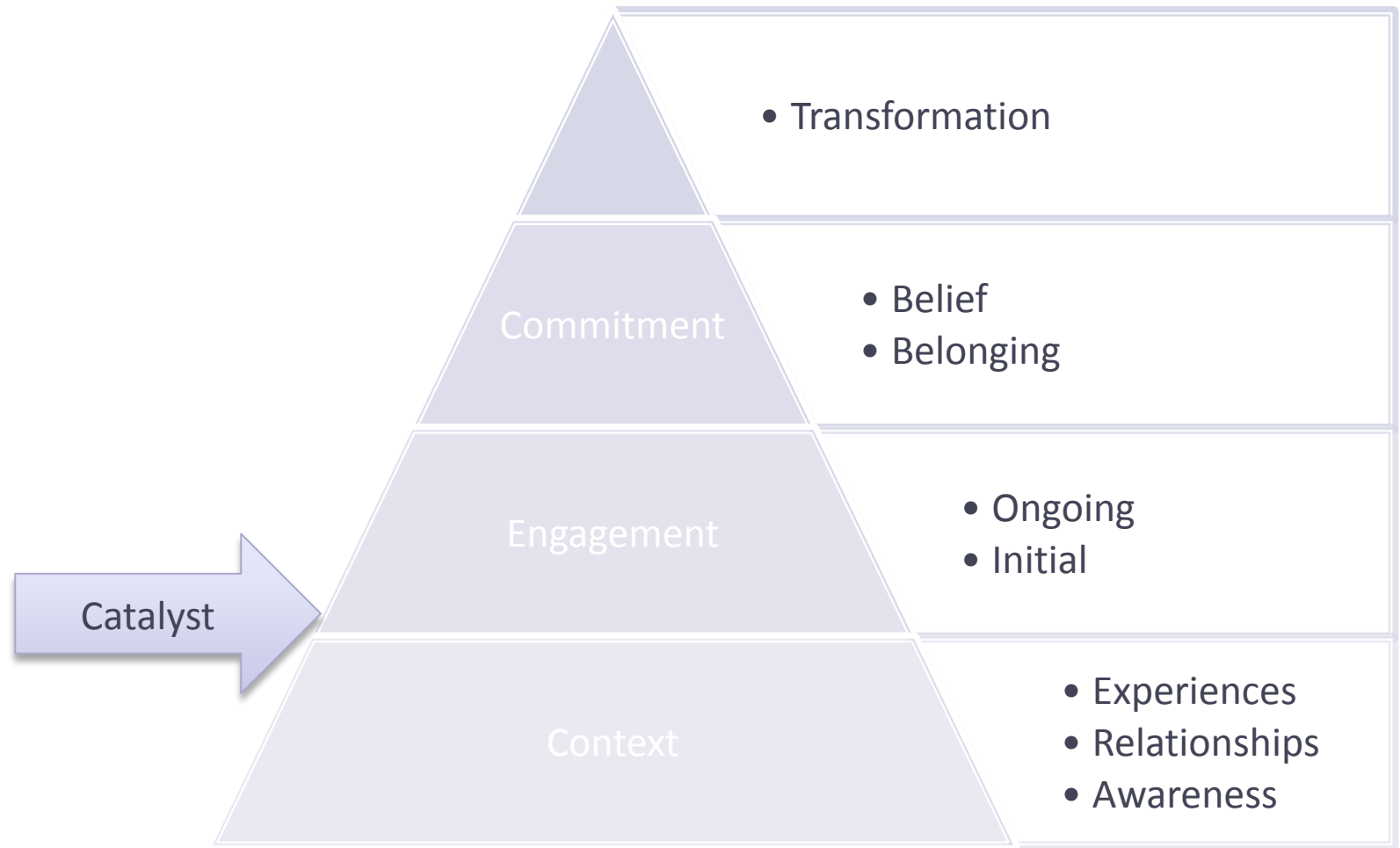


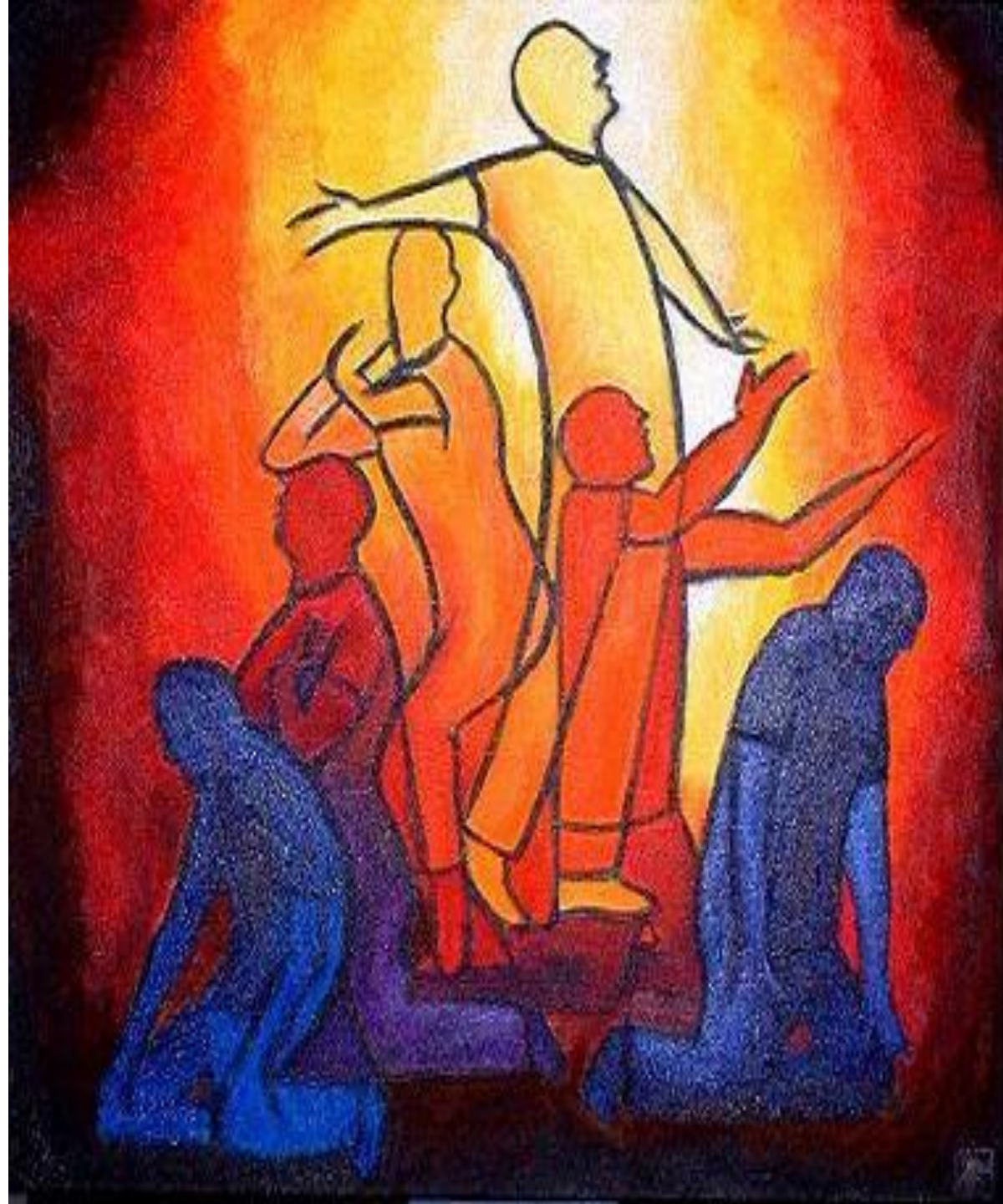


**Q. Belief or belonging – which is  
first?**



# Faith Journey Stages





# Summary: Faith Journeys ...

- Are unique
- Usually gradual, punctuated by more dramatic moments
- Rarely involve sudden transformation
- Usually built on foundations of faith laid before adulthood
- Involve stepping backwards between stepping forward
- Never ending, with few becoming Christlike
- Walk beside people as they journey, disciple and encourage, support and reassure during setbacks
- Let people know it takes time

# Focus on children and young people





# Community Listening



# INTRODUCTION TO THE LADDER



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# Children and young people: their context

- Your home and neighbourhood
- Your activities, use of time
- Your friends, family and others
- How people treat each other
- What matters



**Q. What are the main influences on  
young people's lives?**



# Main influences on young people



Family



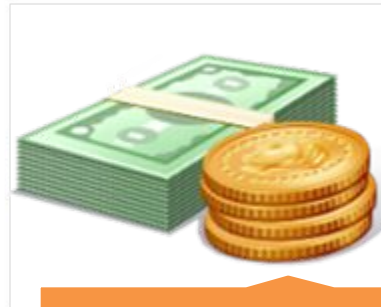
Faith



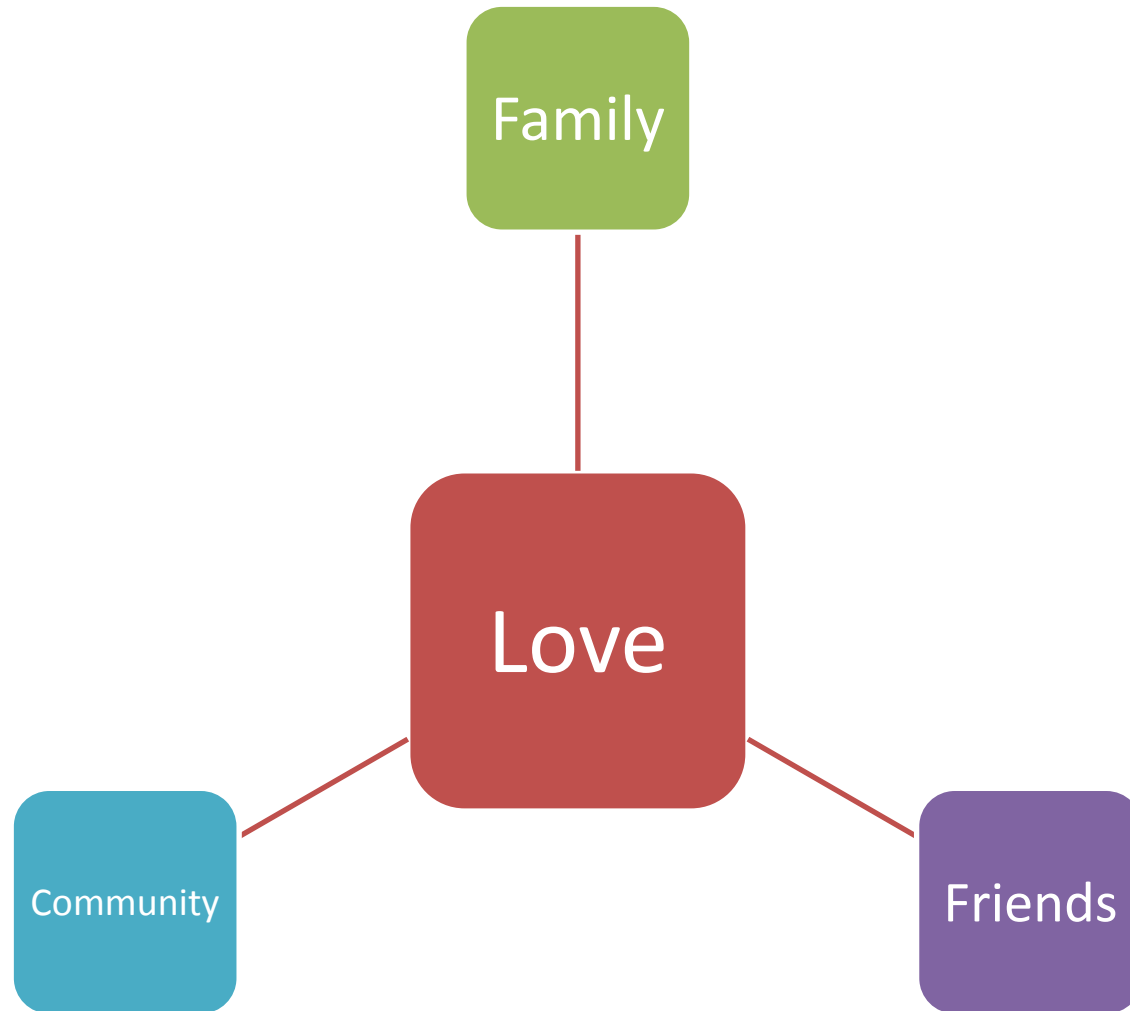
Education



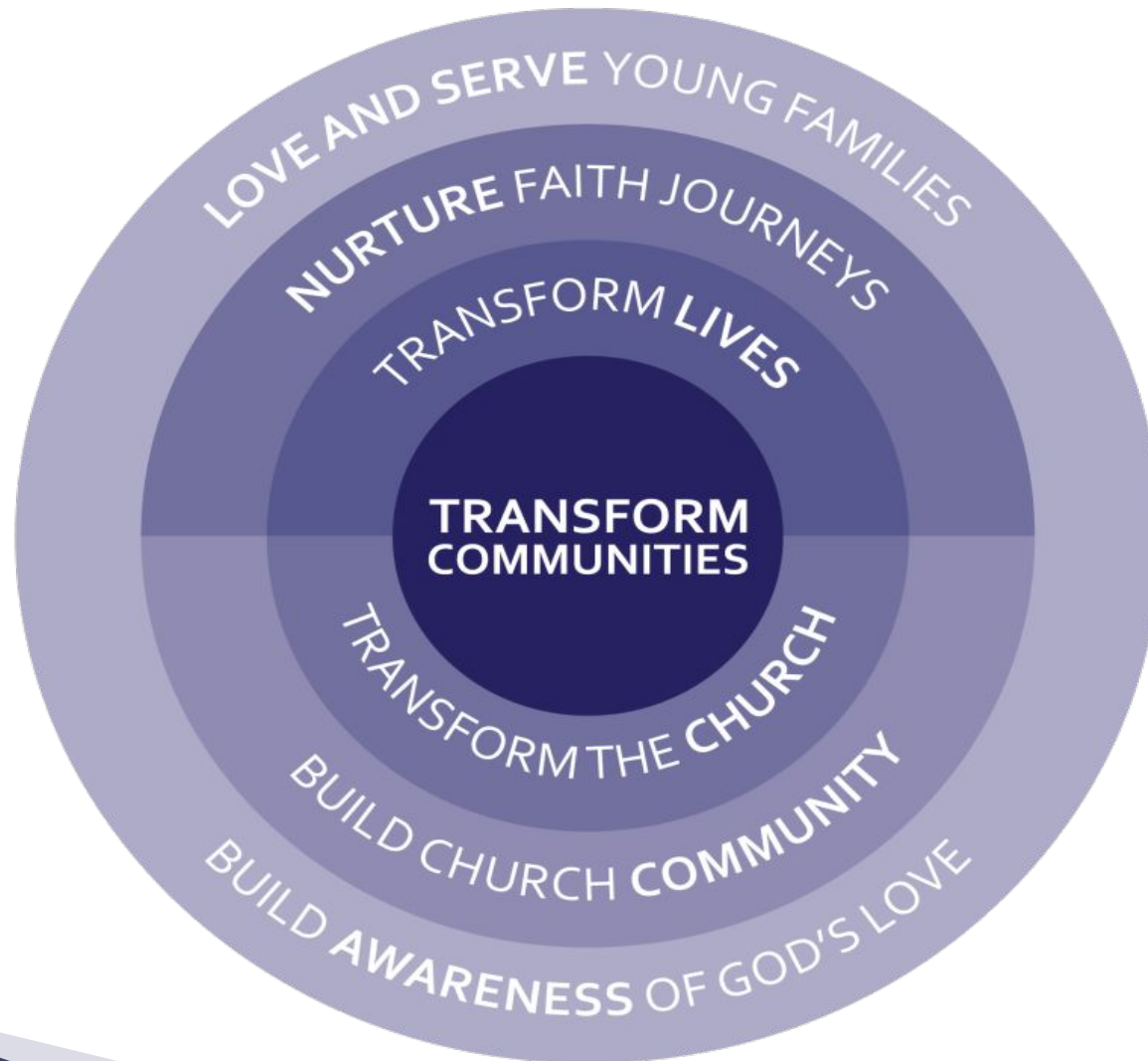
Friends



Money



# Toddler Group: Missional opportunities



# Love and serve young families





# Be Distinctively Christian

Seeing



Hearing



Experiencing



# Nurture the faith of toddlers

- Gathering together
- Seasonal activities
- Songs
- Christian stories
- Craft activities
- Prayer
- Church services



# Nurturing faith at home with families

- God being at the centre of everyday family life
- Children developing their own relationship with God
- Encouraging prayer in families
- Encouraging families to talk about God and faith
- Nurturing the faith of the whole family
- Giving parents confidence to nurture faith
- Making sure families are supported



# God at the centre of all family life

- The ideal is for God to be in everything
  - With families in the everyday, not seen as a time-consuming extra
  - Sharing the joys, challenges, frustrations and celebrations
- Parents should use everyday life as stimulus for nurturing faith
  - Largely through prayer and conversations
- Using routine times as well as spontaneously
  - Mealtimes, bedtimes, journeys, playtimes



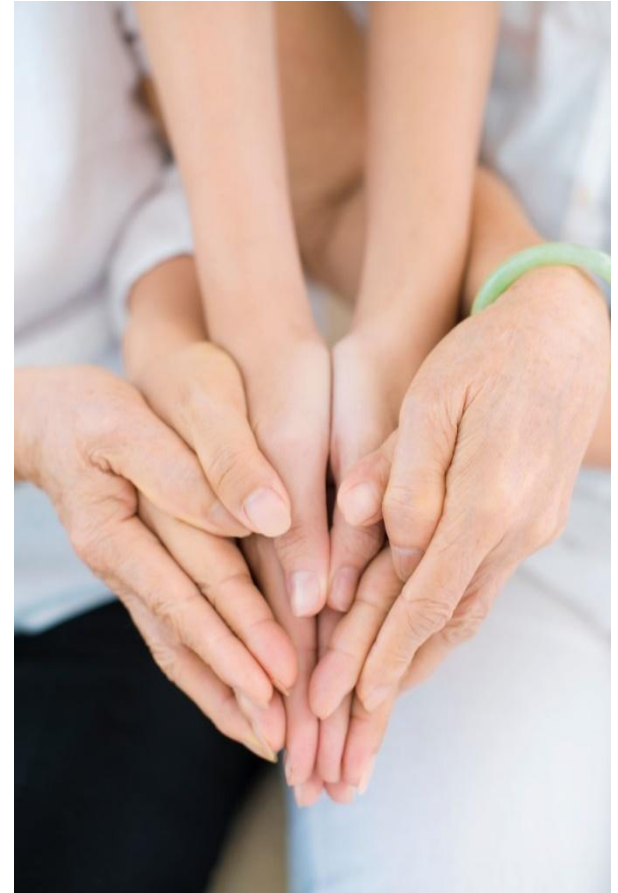
# Children developing their own relationship with God

- Children need encouraging to build their own relationship with God
- Around 3 in 4 parents believe their child has a relationship with God
  - Simple and often quiet
  - Demonstrated by child praying or talking about God
- What helps
  - Prayer, role models, discussion, bible engagement, needing God



# Support that families would welcome for prayer

- Practical ideas
  - Praying as a family
  - Interactive or creative prayer
  - Making it engaging
  - Relaxed, bedtime prayer
- Simple, easily accessible guidance
  - What to expect from children
  - Dealing with confidence issues
- Currently have little support for prayer in the home



# Helps and hindrances

## What helps

- Having time, being relaxed
- Secure faith of parent
- Being intentional
- Using everyday opportunities
- Established routines
- Loving relationships
- God central in family life
- Fresh, inspiring resources
- Supportive Christian fellowship
- Know how best to nurture
- Being encouraged
- Family activities, events, festivals

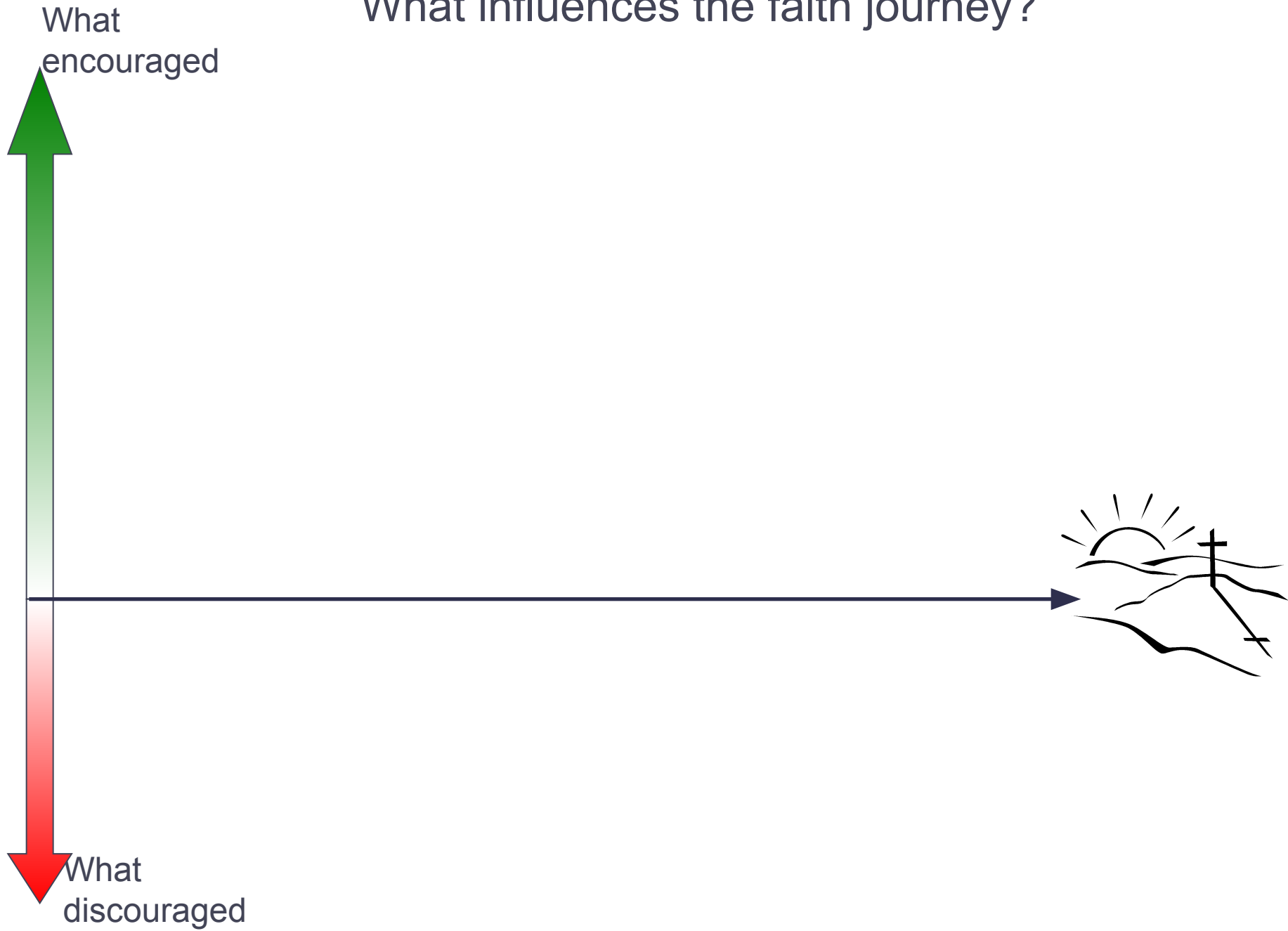
## What hinders

- Busy family lives, lack of time, distractions
- Cultural influences
- Not being intentional or giving faith any priority
- Parent not confident in own faith
- Not sure how best to nurture faith
- Pressure from non-Christians
- Not getting the balance right
- Lack of Christian fellowship
- Lack of encouragement
- Difficult life circumstances
- Delegating responsibility

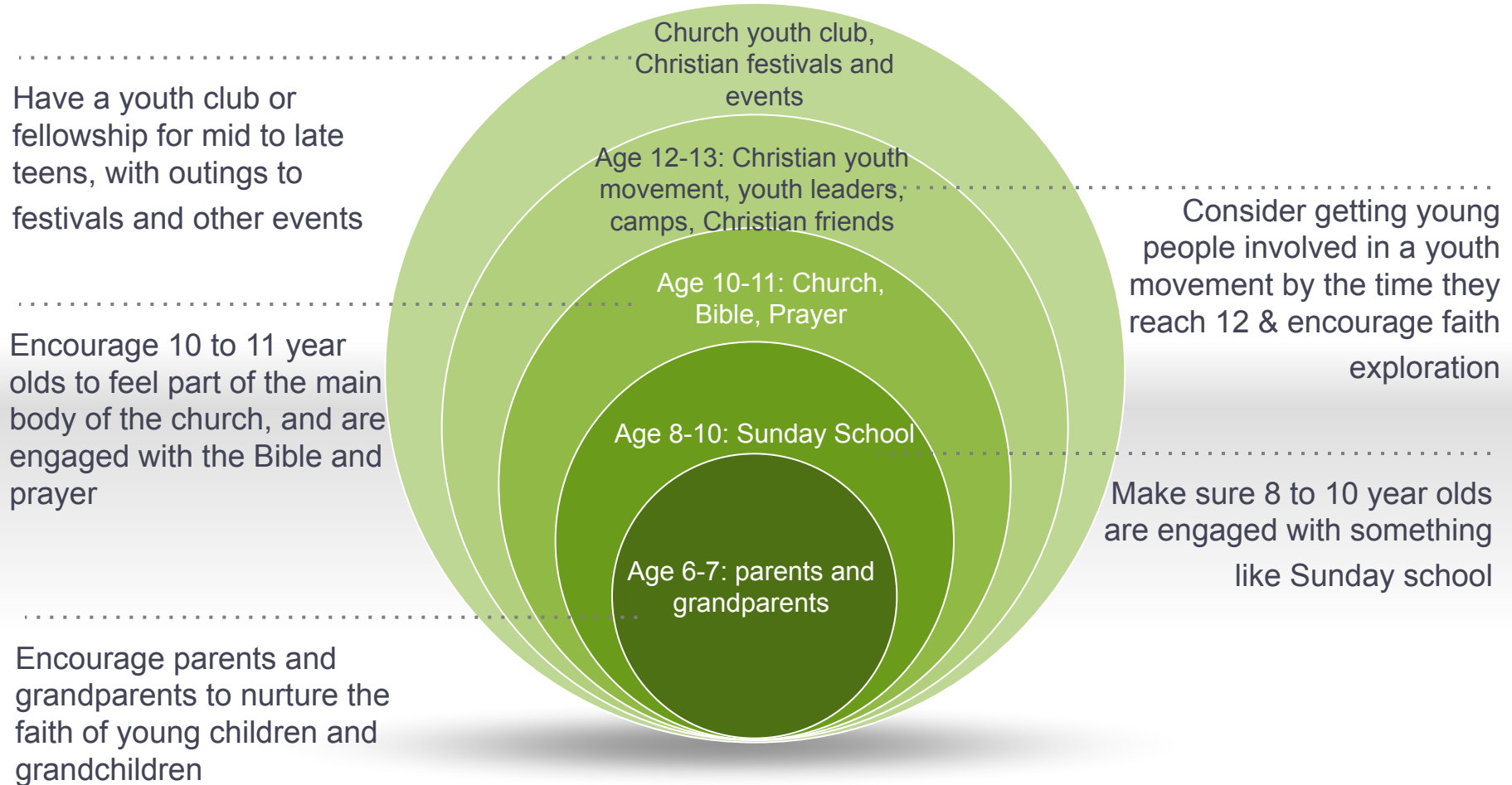
**Q. What/who influenced you on  
your faith journey?**



# What influences the faith journey?



# Focus on **building blocks** for children and young people



# A story of 'building blocks'

- I started attending church at the age of eight after I had been invited to Holiday Bible Club by some school friends. This club led to me coming to Sunday School and Boys Brigade. I liked Sunday School because I was a bright child who enjoyed learning new facts. I enjoyed BB because of the range of games and activities that were involved. I went to a Christian camp for a week when I was 11 and this introduced me to reading the Bible on my own. I was never very regular with this, but I did sporadically read bits and grew in my understanding of God and his demands even if I didn't commit myself fully to Him. Going to Youth Club weekends away which had really intense times of learning and prayer introduced me to the idea of spending time with God. I consider that I became a Christian at a Baptismal service when I was 14, but see these 6 years as God preparing me for that moment of conviction and commitment.*



# Be aware of negative family influences



# Be aware of negative family influences

- Although for most the immediate family are encouraging, they can be a source of strong discouragement
  - Parents, siblings, spouse or partner
- Jesus said:
  - *I came to bring trouble, not peace. I came to turn sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, and daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law. Your worst enemies will be in your own family. (Matthew 10, CEV)*

# Parents who discourage children

- 16% claim to have been discouraged by parents when they were young
  1. parents who are opposed to Christianity
  2. parents who are Christians, but do not share or demonstrate their faith appropriately to their children

# Christian parents

- Some parents who were perceived to be oppressively religious:
  - did not allow the child to question, explore and develop their own faith
  - were not seen to be authentic Christians by their children (e.g. not demonstrating Christian attitudes/behaviours other than churchgoing)
- Young people are constantly looking at and learning from others – it is important for parents to model appropriate Christian behaviour

# Young Christians and siblings

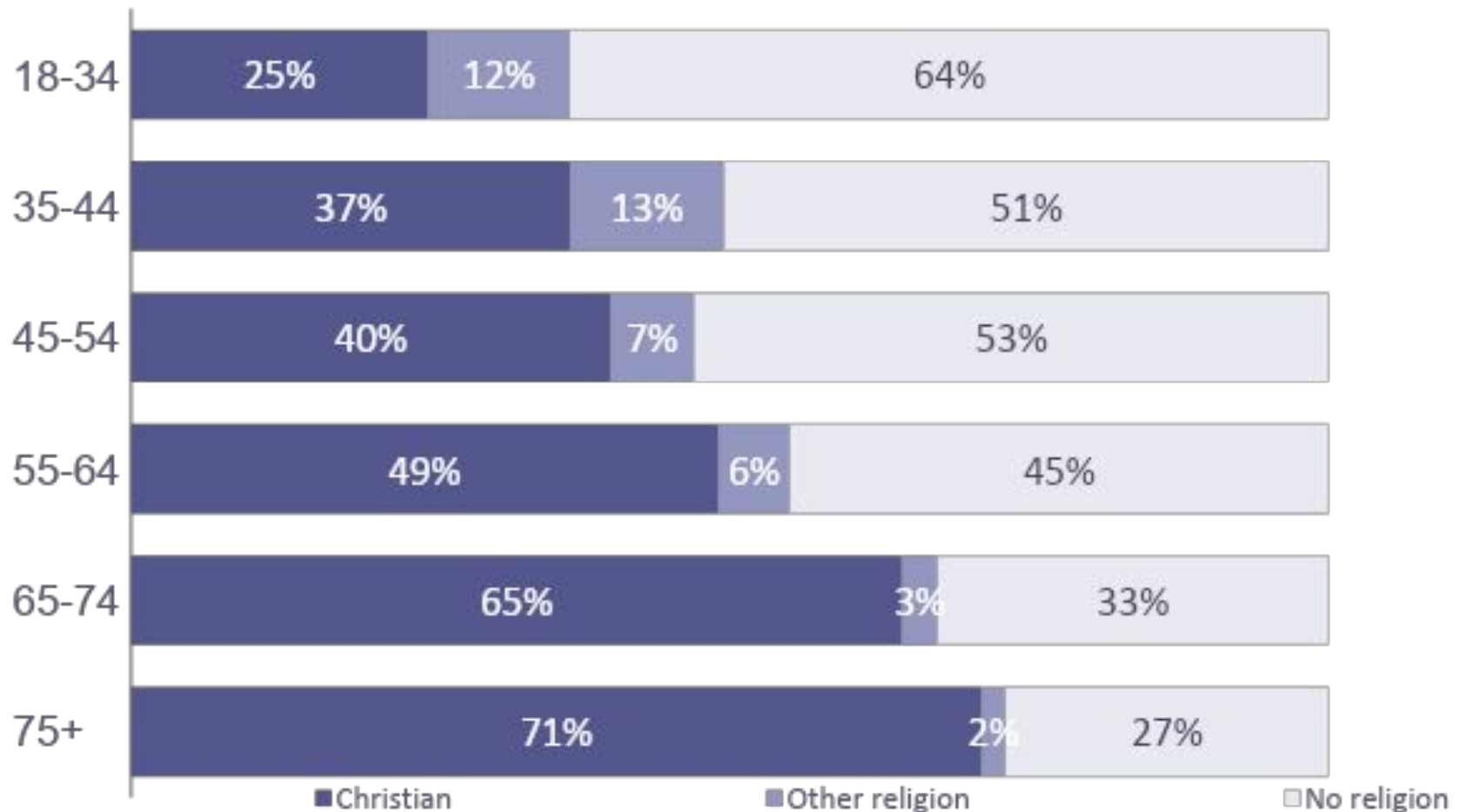
- For young Christians with siblings, although 21% were encouraged by their siblings, 14% were discouraged
  - It may be the case that where a brother or sister becomes a Christian, and the sibling does not, then the relationship between the siblings changes
- *Older sister was militantly anti-religious and even encouraged me to throw away my Gideon's bible.*

# Transition times are important



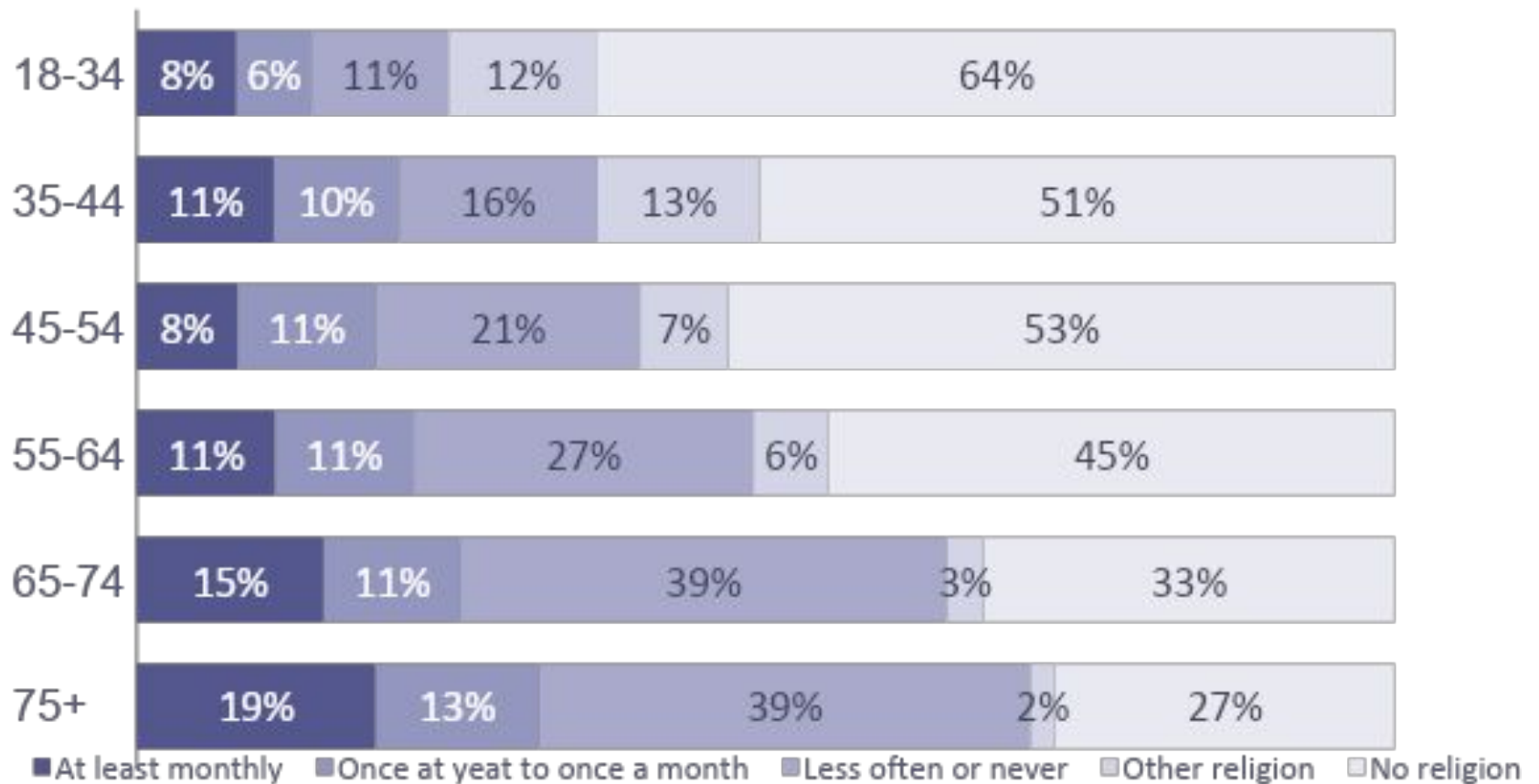


## Religion by age

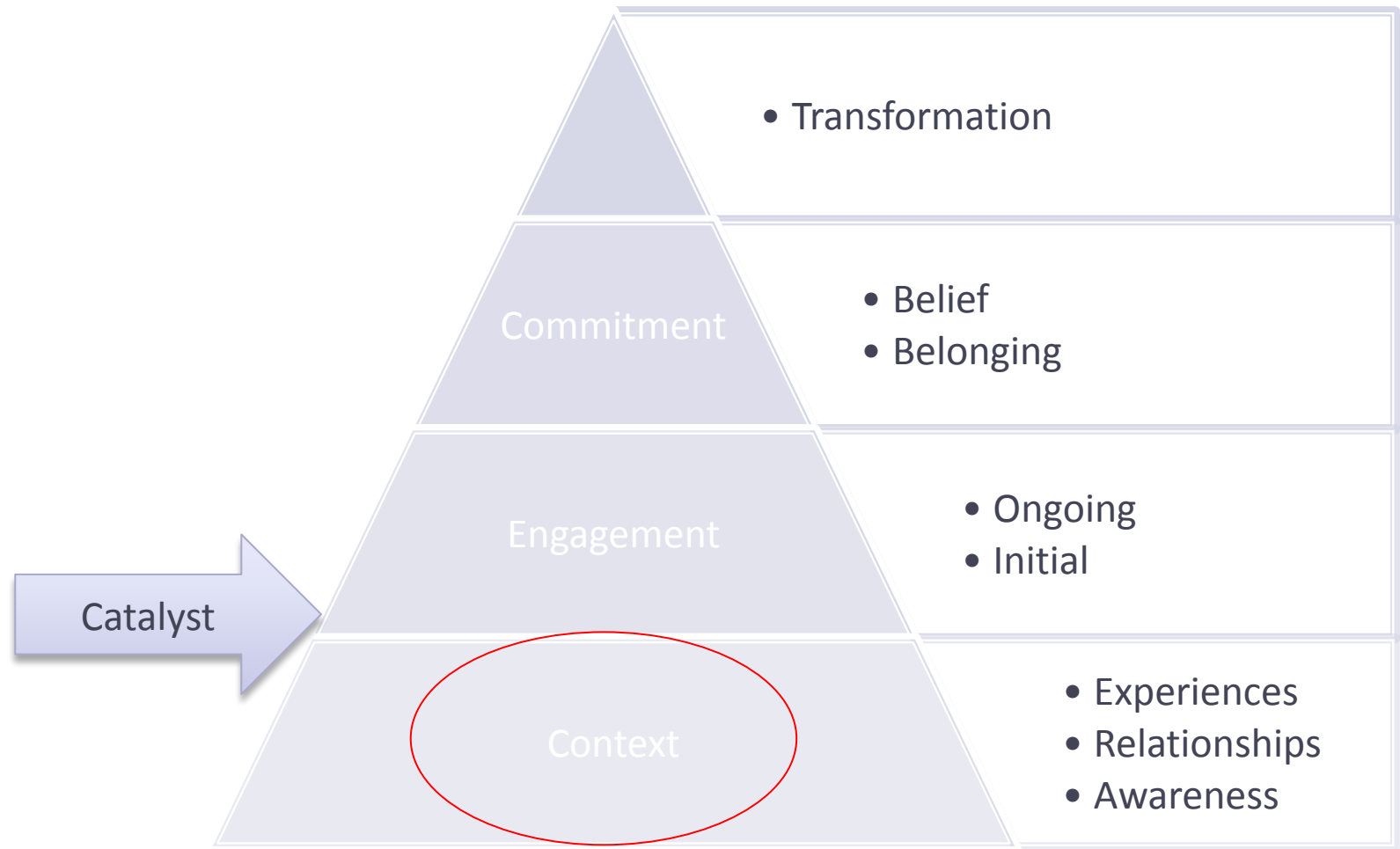


British Election Study post-election in-person (random probability) survey, 2145 respondents, Jun-Oct 2017

# Church attendance and religion



# Be in the lives of children and young people



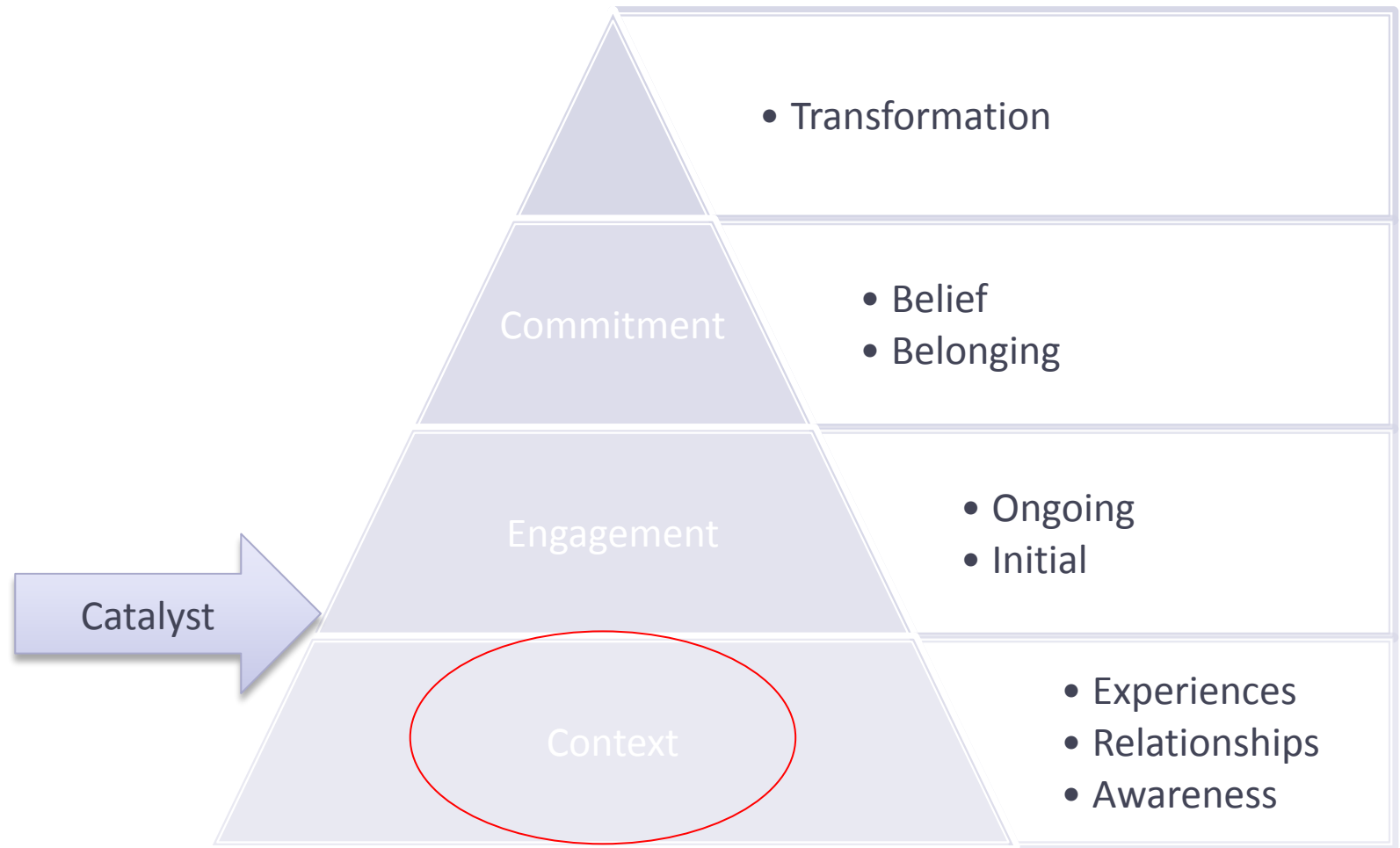
# Children and young people and their families

- Be in their lives
- Love them
  - Build association between church and love
- Intentionally nurture faith
  - a mix of constant nurture and motivating 'spikes'
- Use a wide range of people to nurture (intergenerational)
  - make sure they are supported
- Encourage networking with Christian peers
- Be aware of transition points
- Recognise the needs of those not in Christian families

# Focus on adults

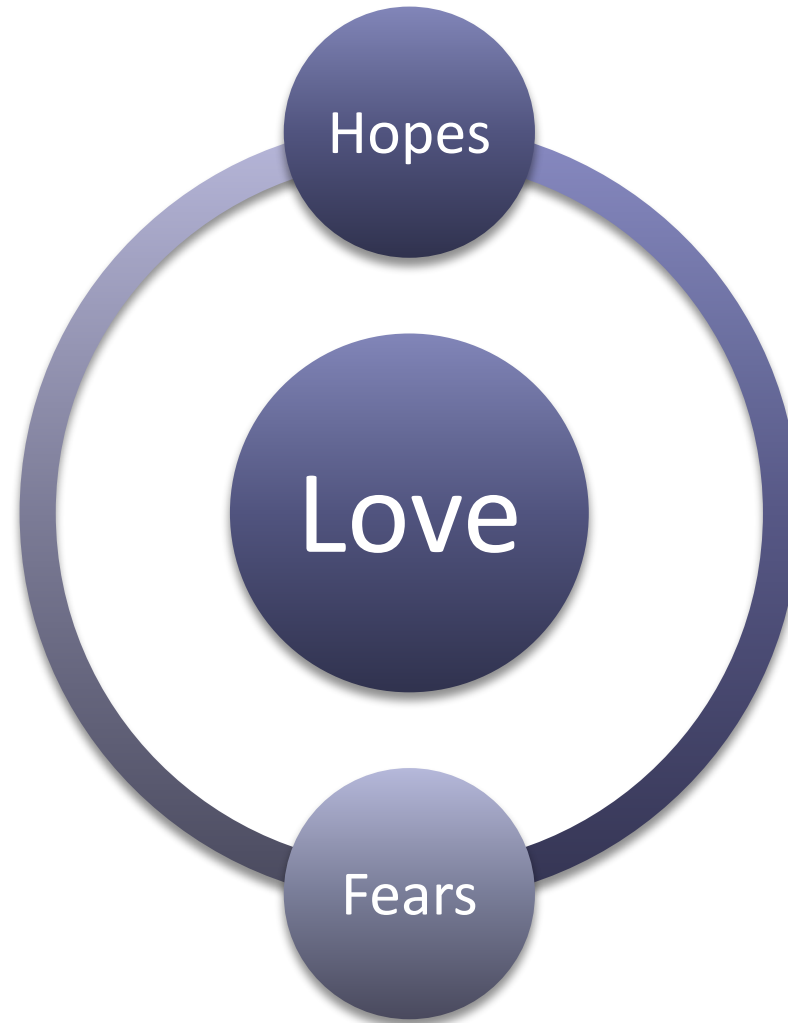


# Be in the lives of people





# Life Journeys



# The CofE in context

Where is it in people's lives?



## Main perception of the CofE ...



- Often dismissed as irrelevant as people are not religious

# Mystery worshipper findings

- Footage of mystery worshippers shown on 20<sup>th</sup> November has been omitted to comply with GDPR rules. The 3 clips showed:
  - The strong negative perceptions about Sunday worship (e.g. dull, boring, 'hell and damnation' sermons, cold dark churches) – sometimes based on experiences of churchgoing as a child, but sometimes based on media portrayal of church and the experiences of others. Memorable quote '*am* a committed Christian, but I am *not* a committed churchgoer'
  - The experiences of a couple that were not looking forward to going to church, particularly as they were hungover from a wedding the previous night! Their experience at the church visited exceeded their low expectations by far. It was described as fun, interesting, friendly etc. and the couple were keen to return to the church.
  - There was only one poor experience. The visitor did not have a warm welcome, with little engagement and not even eye contact. The whole church seemed unfriendly, with little conversation between members of the congregation – before, during or after the service.

# Charlotte's faith journey

- *My views definitely changed. I think I've always been wary of the church trying to convert me or something but actually it was a really friendly and inclusive place. There were lots of different types of people and families and so much of their work was just helping others in the community.*
- *I think I expected that churchgoers were maybe older and closed minded in their views and opinions but that was also wrong. My opinion of vicars changed too. Ours was very cool and easy to talk to and embraced our slightly wacky ideas completely.*
- *I remember feeling nervous, in part because everyone there knew my husband's family and I wanted to make a good impression but mainly because I was expecting to feel uncomfortable or be made to do or say things that I didn't want to do. It was actually completely fine and a lovely experience on the whole. I think what made me look forward to the next time was the community feel and the nice friendly atmosphere.*
- *The one thing that put me off was one section of the service which had a comment in it about non-baptised people (I can't remember what specifically now but the general message was about trying to make them see the error of their ways) and that was the one time I've felt uncomfortable and pressured and a bit like an outsider. However, it wasn't aimed at me so I sort of ignored it. I'm not sure that the church could have done anything to make us feel more welcome. The congregation and leaders were very welcoming.*
- *I think my opinion of the Christian faith is now that there is more to it than I maybe cynically thought before the wedding. There is a lot of wonderful stuff happening in churches and it would be great if maybe more people had the opportunity to see that.*

# Looking to the past is not all negative ...

- Some nostalgia for the Christian past
  - Christian values, decency, family, respect ...
- Needed in today's world
  - Consumerism, greed, materialism, crime, lack of respect ...



## Recent headlines

- Church in crisis as only 2% of young adults identify as Church of England
- Church of England numbers at record low
- Church of England staring at oblivion as just 2% of young Britons say they identify with it
- CofE facing 'unrelenting decline' as number of Brits identifying as Anglican halves in 15 years

# CofE has a significant presence in society

- The body of Christ in their daily lives
- Social action – 33,000 projects run or supported
- 35 to 50 million visiting churches for tourism
- Digital church
  - 6.8m reached last Advent/Christmas
  - 2.44m on social media, quadrupled on Instagram – mainly under 34s
  - 2m new visitors on websites
  - 5.4 reached in Lent
  - 1000s using Alexa skill, 60% for prayers
  - 410k downloaded CHP apps

# Life Events: warm contacts

- 1.2 million each year - Wedding couples, the bereaved, baptism families/Godparents



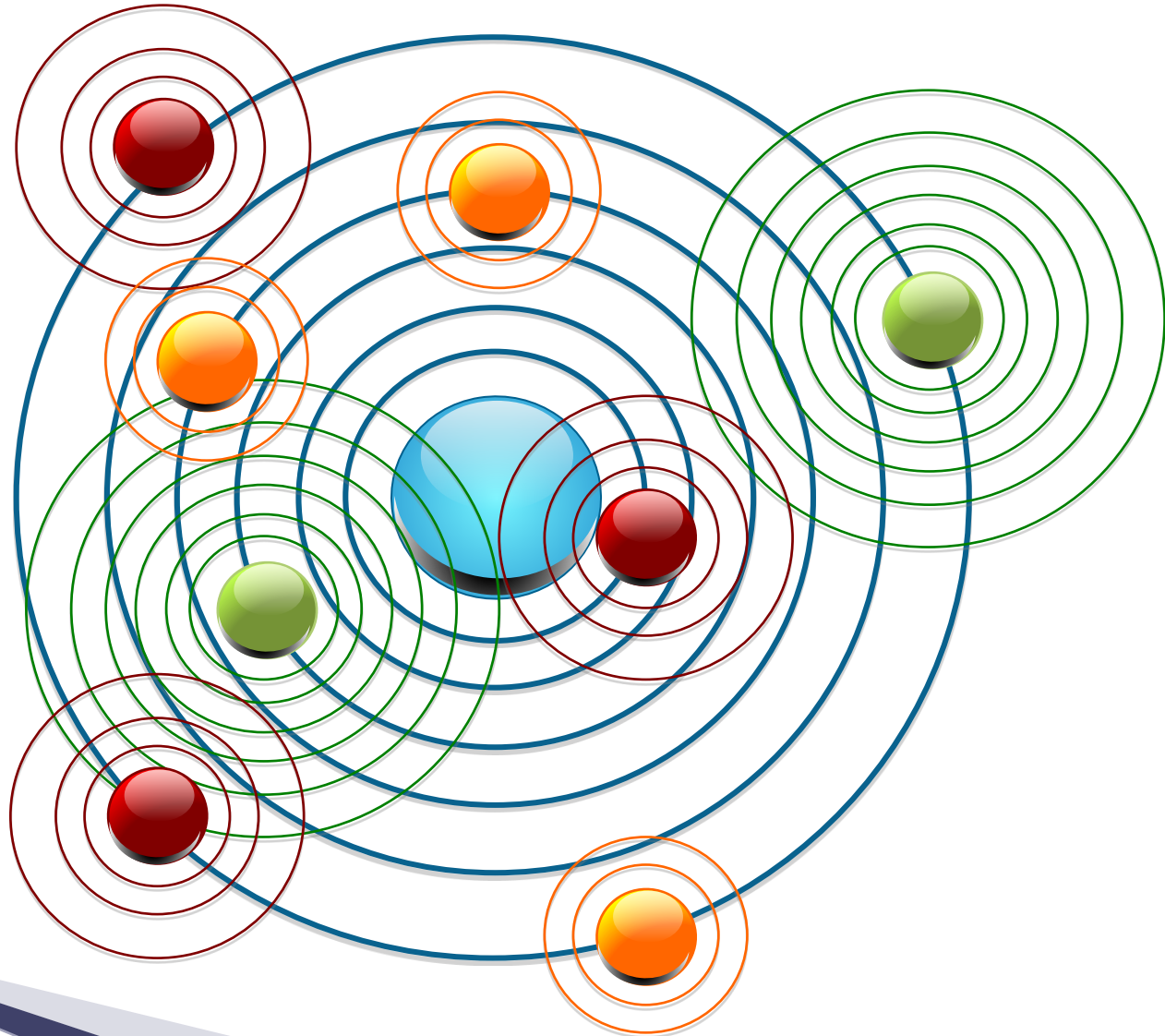
# Life Events: wider contacts

- 500,000 each week





# The ripple effect

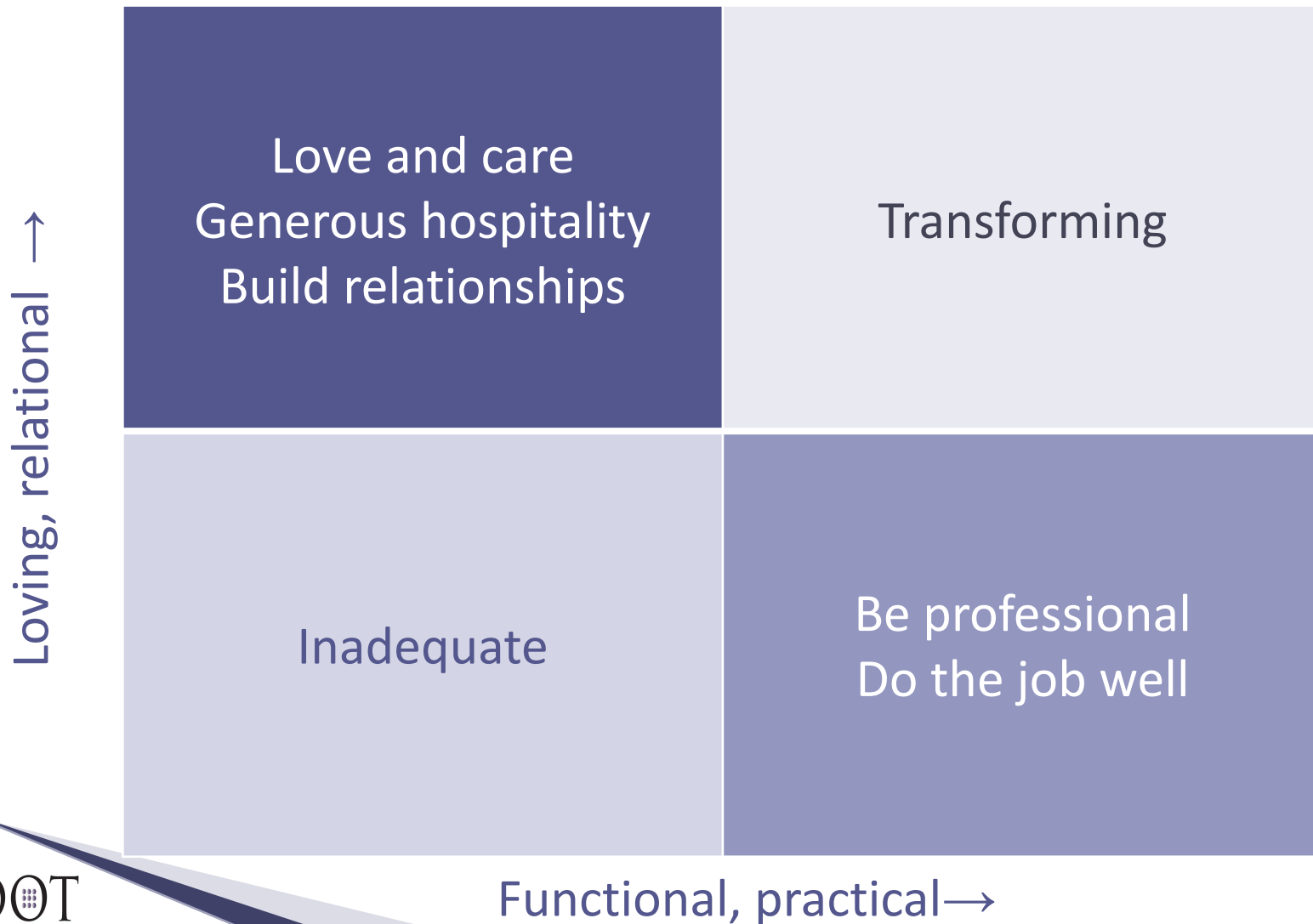


# Church talking about Qualifying Connection couples:

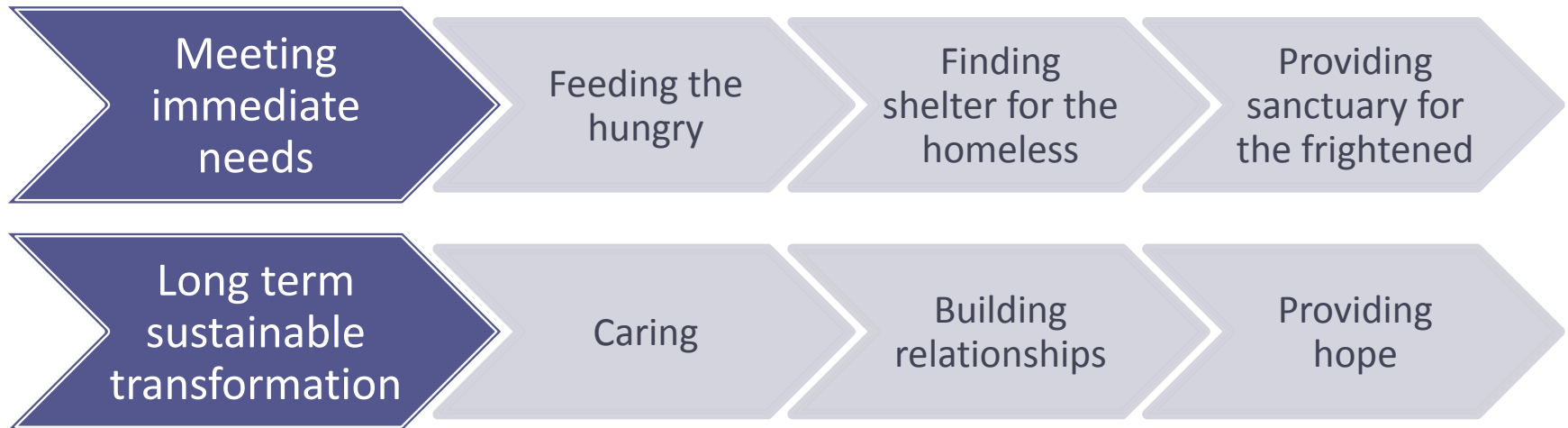
- We talk to the PCC and we say to them that we need to be a welcoming Church. We've explained that actually this is a wonderful missional opportunity ... We're constantly asking them to be aware that we've got these guys coming up, making the effort to be with us, and that we've got this glorious opportunity to show them how Church is, what Church is all about, and to break some of those misconceptions about what people believe the Church is these days. It's wonderful. It's just wonderful. I'm very passionate about it because I can see the return that we're getting. It's brilliant. It's just brilliant.*



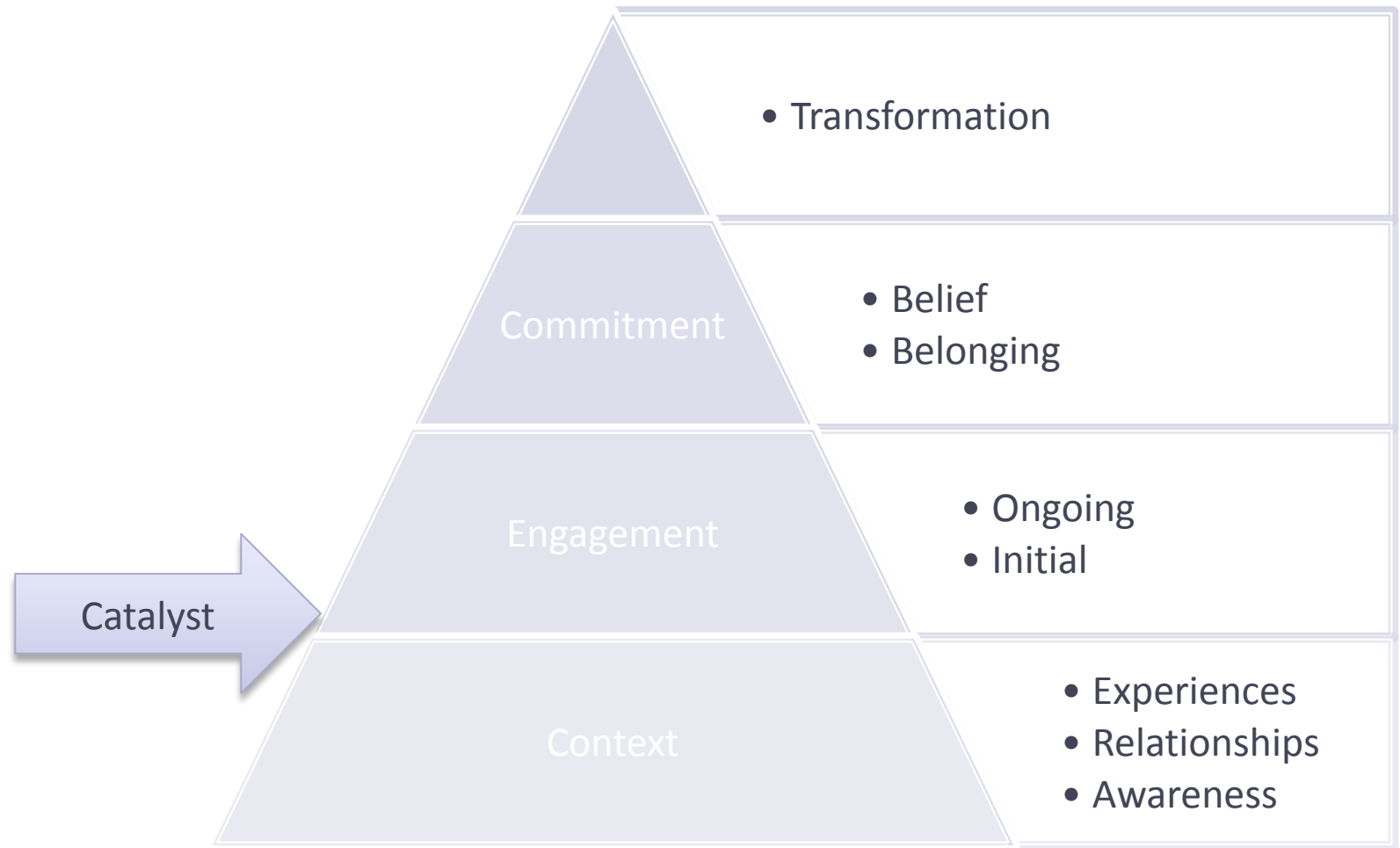
# Make positive memories with every encounter



# CUF Research: Transforming local communities



# Be intentional with faith journey nurturing



# 53% have no religion ...

What have they rejected?



Do they believe anything?

# Not an active rejection of faith

- Few real atheists, most are agnostic
  - Rejection of churchgoing
- Willingness to engage with faith
  - in a neutral environment

- 51% of adults pray, 20% pray at least once a month
- 20% of those 'not religious' pray
- Popularity of #pray



- 31% believe in angels
- 29% believe they have a guardian angel
- 5% believe they have seen or heard an angel



# People are searching for meaning

- Unless they are already connected, church is not on the 'spiritual search map'
- They look for love and belonging
- Searchers with no religion (23% of population)
  - are young
  - Searching in voluntary/community work, spending reflective time alone, taking up an artistic or musical hobby





# Start from where people are with faith

Sutton, Liverpool



# Sutton, Light Night



HD

[More video settings](#)

[Report video issue](#) >

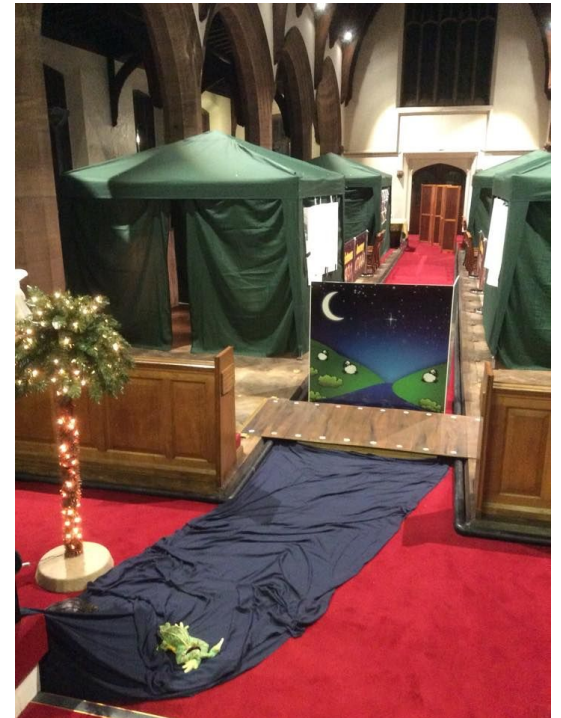
Millions of people are connected to CofE ...

How can we  
get them to  
church?



?

# The Journey



Millions of people are connected to CofE ...

How can we  
get them to  
church?



How can we  
get them to  
church?

# Nurturing faith journeys: evolving church

- Relationship with God is more important than Sunday worship
- Finding new ways to connect with people
- Nurturing faith where people are
  - Social action spaces
  - Online
  - In the home, in the workplace
- Starting from where people are on their journey
- Developing new ways to do church + evolving existing services



# Laura's Faith Journey

- *James (my hubby) grew up in our village. He's a local farmer who's family have farmed here for over a 100years and the church has been pretty central for all major events for most of this time. So there was never really any doubt that we'd get married there.*
- *Before getting married we'd turn up for the 'big' services (Christmas, Easter, remembrance and harvest) and James's Dad is one of the bell ringers, so we knew the church a little and they sort of knew us.*
- *Once we had an idea of dates and we gave our vicar a call. ... She was so welcoming, supportive and overall happy for us. It was so nice to start our journey with her to guide us. We attended some evening meetings with Rev Steph and discussed our relationship and marriage. I think we were both a little unsure with our place within the church at that stage too.*
- *The congregation (and the majority of our village) is aging, with very few young people or families attending normal services. When I first attended our church for our wedding I found it pretty intimidating and a little unwelcoming. Despite knowing people within the church, no one except the vicar welcomed me or spoke to me. I think that because we were not regular church goers they didn't really know how to engage with us.*
- *After our wedding we probably continued as we did before until we had our first daughter. After her arrival I started to attend the playgroup and get more involved. We're now more active within the church and our community. Rev Steph also never forgets our anniversary and we always get an e-card at Christmas!*
- *Since moving to the village I've seen the church slowly change. It's always been at the centre of our village, but it's not the heart of our village anymore. This is very slowly changing, and they've started to do more with and for different groups within the community.*
- *We do now refer to it as our church. `*

# Summary: Context

- Sunday worship is the public face of the CofE
  - Negative expectations (largely unjustified)
  - Declining numbers
  - Increasing numbers claim 'no religion' (i.e. churchgoing)
- CofE has significant presence in society
- Many people pray, many are looking for meaning in life
- Make positive memories with every encounter
- Be intentional with nurturing faith journeys
- Start from where people are
- Continue to evolve – changing perceptions and practices



# Catalysts



# Potential Catalysts

- Life Centred or Church Centred
- Crisis (personal, community or the wider world)
- Transition points in people's lives, including life events
- Encounters with other people
- Encounters with church
- Seasonal events

# Transition times are important



Adults

# Catalysts

- Be aware of catalytic moments
- Create catalytic moments
- Be intentional about the opportunities these present
  - For nurturing faith
  - For loss of faith

# Initial engagement



# Initial engagement

- Active interest in faith
- Nature of the engagement will vary
  - Context?
  - Catalyst?
  - What is relevant/accessible available?
- Beware:
  - A negative experience can delay faith journey progress for years, or even a lifetime

# Initial experience of church

- Like going to a school for the first time ...



# Holy Communion – the least positive memory of churchgoing





# Sarah's faith journey

- *The church has had family connections for many years which is how we knew about it. We met with the vicar the July before our wedding in May. Prior to this I had only had contact for family events at the church.*
- *We started attending church right after meeting with the vicar, we went at least twice a month from that point til the wedding.*
- *The vicar first asked us to attend, but it was only a couple of times of going before we found we wanted to go. ... Initially it was because the vicar and the members of the church were so friendly and welcoming - we wanted to go just because they were so supportive of our decision to want to marry there.*
- *As time went on I started to realise that it was more for the actual service and worship that I wanted to go.*
- *We have continued to attend as often as possible since. I have since been baptised and confirmed in the same church.*

# Ongoing engagement



# Engaging with faith

- Relational
- Experiential
- Intellectual



# Be aware of negative influences



# Discouragement by spouses

- 1 in 10 of those married claim to have been discouraged by their spouses
- When a Christian is married to a non-Christian, tensions can arise
- Issues ranged from Christian partners being challenged and discouraged to instances of extreme violence
- These tensions can lead to marriage breakdown

# Discouragement by Christians

- Other Christians tend to discourage ‘passively’ rather than actively
  - They may be totally unaware of what impact their actions are having on others
- The impact is greatest on Christians who are relatively new in their faith
  - and are looking to other Christians for behavioural and attitudinal guidance

# Ongoing engagement

- Be active and intentional in inviting engagement
- Offer a range of ways to engage, nurturing faith in different styles
  - Relational, Experiential, Intellectual
- Encourage people to show the love of God to each other, but especially those new to faith
  - Listen well to each other
- Take care of those who are on a faith journey without the support of their immediate family



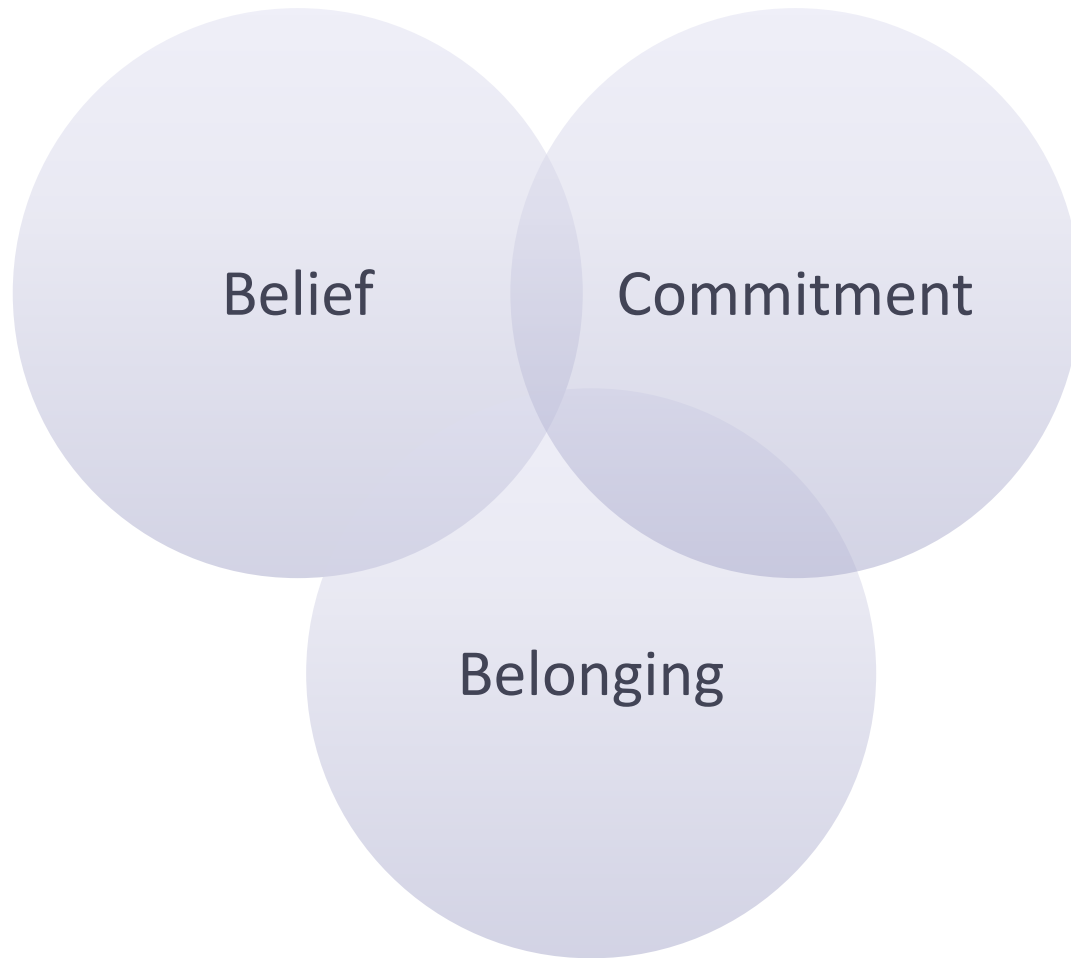
# Emily's Faith Journey

- *The church is the centre part of the town that I grew up in. The bells can just be heard ringing from my family's house. I have a strong memory of my Nanna teaching me the Lord's Prayer outside the doors of the church. I don't remember ever going inside but it being a well maintained 12 Century church and always breathtaking to pass by and linger in the church yard.*
- *My husband and I emailed through the Church website to ask for a meeting to discuss our wedding plans about 7 months prior to the wedding date we had in mind. After the meetings we were asked to attend Church for Sunday service at least 6 times before wedding date and to include the Banns being read.*
- *It took me a while to get use to Sunday services with a large amount of people gathering but soon the church began feeling smaller and familiar! Rather like going to school for the first time... When we entered, a little bit late, we had a filled up church congregation in front of us and we ( after being given hymn book and reading material ) rushed to the side seats and sat down all flustered.*
- *I had never even been to a Church service, nor was I use to following service scripture or how to find the hymns being sung and it did seem like everyone else knew exactly what to do. However I was fortunate to find my future husband knew exactly what to do and he helped me. This was a pleasant surprise and by the 3rd service I began to relax into the structure of the service. However we always sat hidden in the side seats.*
- *I think in general the experience was exactly as I had anticipated it to be like.. Awesome, Spiritual and most importantly everyone seemed to be so excited for us! The whole congregation seemed to be enthusiastic and super friendly. This almost was too much for me initially but so pleased that they did make us feel welcomed in this manner in hind sight!*
- *From the very beginning at our first meeting, Reverend Ann was able to reassure us and from my perspective I felt an instant spiritual connection to her as did my husband. Ann, and the other vicars, would always be available after the Sunday services, so we had gotten to know them and got a good rapport before the wedding day. Every service attended I came away crying as I found the whole experience very profound. Reverend Ann always made me feel normal and safe. .. the spiritual connection took me by total surprise... It was a very personal experience!*

# Emily's Faith Journey (continued)

- *We have both certainly kept in touch with the Church although it was a couple of months after the wedding that we started to return to the Church. Reverend Ann remembered us upon returning and was always available to talk with us, she always enquired how we were doing as newlyweds. Even some of the choir came up to us and remarked on how beautiful the ceremony was, this made us very happy! We now feel it is our place to go for whatever reason to sit and contemplate or to worship.*
- *In fact there has been family difficulties since we got married that have meant independently both my husband and I have gone into the Church for comfort and support. That is how welcome they made us feel before the wedding, we find it a beautiful safe and spiritual place.*
- *We also attend regularly the religious services that they provide along with some of the courses such as the lent course and bible studies. My husband and I also took part in the Confirmation class last year where I myself was baptised.*
- *We sometimes in the evening or when we are in town just walk and wander through the church yard and always if the door is open we go in and sit or light a candle.*
- *This always makes us feel united and blessed as a couple and in the days and months following the wedding as newlyweds this really helped us keep calm and focused on each other.*
- *I can't imagine getting married anywhere else, especially anywhere which didn't allow us to turn up at any time afterwards to remember our special day and the nurturing of our marriage that we received from the Church.*
- *We have become members of the congregation since our wedding almost every Sunday and use it on a regular basis. This is truly amazing as I was not a Christian before we started our marriage journey! I was baptised last year 2017 and my husband affirmed his faith in this church after attending confirmation class held in the parish. It has been a wonderful spiritual journey for us both. We have been recently asked to join the serving team and feel it a great honour!*

# Belief, Belonging, Commitment



# Faith loss



# Faith loss

- Is usually gradual
- For 70% this happens between the ages of 18 and 29
- Can be traumatic (if faith was previously strong)
- For 92% of church leavers no one came after them when they left
- Caused by
  - Reshaping of worldview, causing a questioning of beliefs  
Christian faith no longer credible
  - An experience of personal difficulty or trauma
  - Disillusionment or isolation from church

# Faith loss

- What the church can do
  - Be authentic – allow people to express, discuss and process doubt
  - Be a loving presence
    - Supporting people through the challenges of life
  - Notice when someone drifts away
  - Help people build a personal faith which is resilient and not reliant on an individual church (or any church)

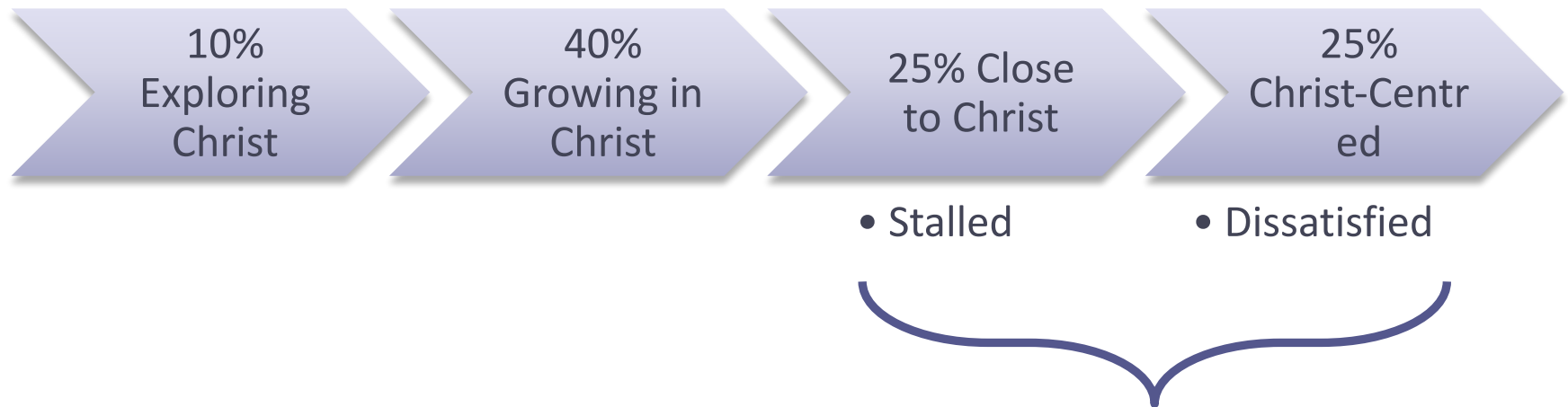
# Faith nurture

Maturing Christians



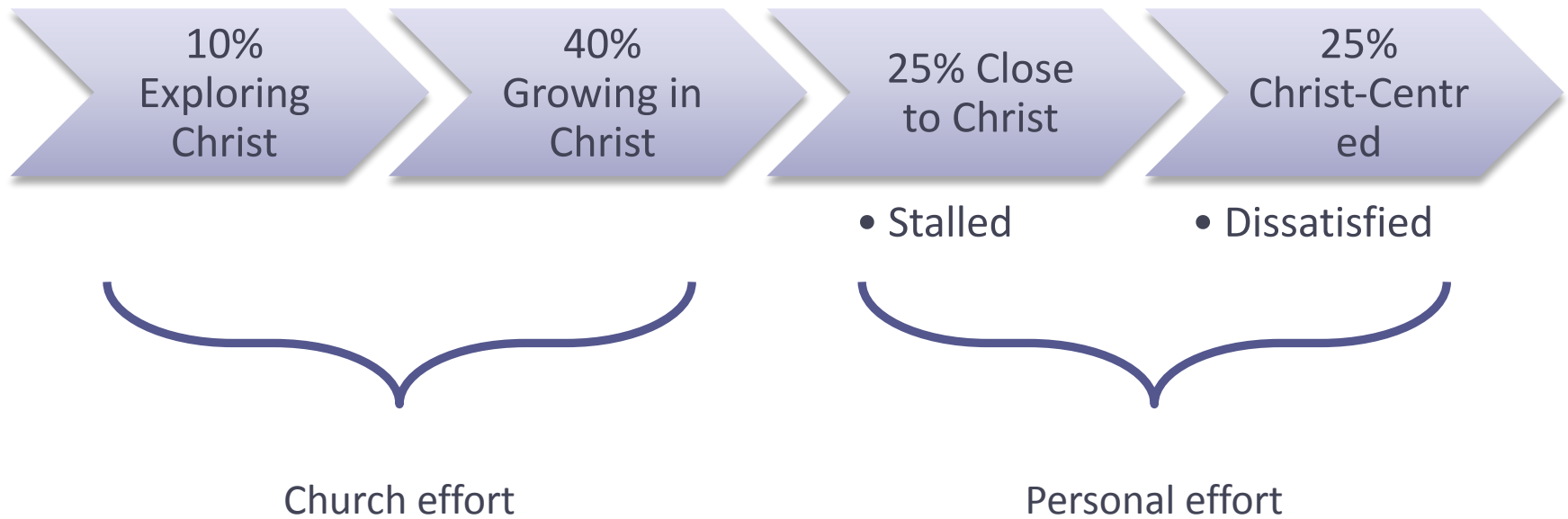


# Reveal Research

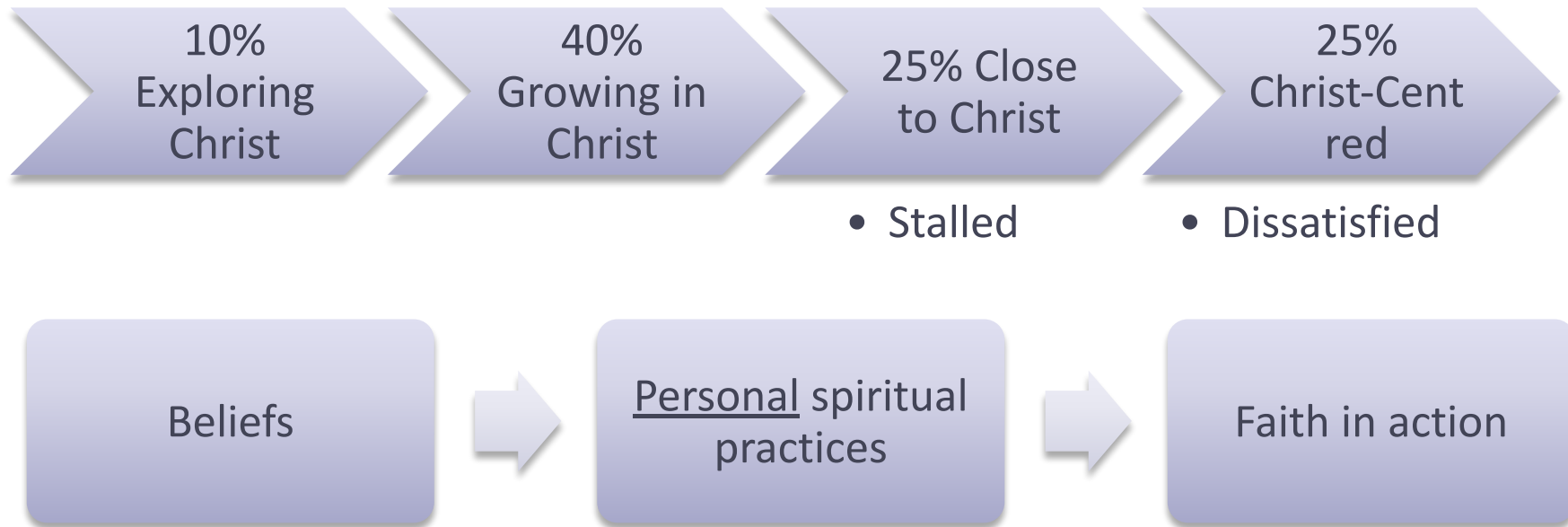


25% of church membership  
Stalled or Dissatisfied

# Reveal Research



# Reveal Research



# The church can help nurture ...

- Help shape beliefs
- Encourage good spiritual practices
- Foster relationships between Christians where spiritual growth can be encouraged and mentored
- Create opportunities for people to put their faith into action through serving and giving

... but individuals need to be intentional

- make the most of available opportunities
  - devote time and energy
  - engage in spiritual practices
  - form spiritual relationships with others
- 
- Without this intentionality and ownership spiritual growth is less likely to occur

# Final thoughts



# Final Thoughts

- Set expectations of faith journeys being long and complex, with times of calm and times of drama
- Build strong foundations with children and young people
- Encourage the development of a personal faith as early as possible
- Make sure faith is relevant to everyday life
- Make positive memories with every encounter
  - Always love
- Nurture intentionally
- Engage in a variety of ways
  - Relational, Experiential, Intellectual



# Final Thoughts

- Meet people where they are with faith
- Make sure people are supported well
  - Encourage intergenerational links
- Be there in the transitions times and crises
- Be aware of negative family influences
- Continue to evolve, help change the image of church
- Be Incarnational, so that people experience the love God

# Thank you

