



CHURCH LEADER'S PACK

Hello, welcome to #RememberWhen!

Thank you for the incredible way that you give your time, energy and gifts to see God's kingdom grow. We are grateful for all you do for the UK church, especially in the context of an ever-changing cultural landscape.

We're thrilled that you have decided to be part of **#RememberWhen**. We hope that this resource helps you to support and equip your church family as they remember the work that God has done in their lives and share those stories with their friends, families and communities.

#RememberWhen is born out of our passion to see the church on fire for Jesus, remembering His goodness and making Him known. But it simply wouldn't be possible without you sharing in the vision and encouraging your community to get involved.

We believe that all of us have the ability to remember a time when God showed us His goodness, faithfulness, grace and love. Whether it was a prayer answered last week, a friend healed last month, or a time when God has brought His peace in hardship, we are called to be a community that remembers when God has been faithful. Sharing memories of what God has done in our lives helps to show our friends and family that God is active and relevant in our time.

Within this pack, you'll find biblical reflections, devotions and prayers around this theme of remembering what God has done for us. These are just for you. We hope that they lead you to reflect on God's goodness and refresh your commitment to sharing Jesus with those around you. We've also included four sermon outlines to help you as you encourage your congregation to remember what God has done.

Just as you are a blessing to your church, we hope that this pack will greatly bless you in your ministry. We are grateful that you are with us, and we are for you as you go out and **#RememberWhen** with your community.

First published in the United Kingdom by the Evangelical Alliance in 2020

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Leader's devotional

Session 1

Remembering and retelling what God has done is core to our DNA as a Christian community

Do you remember a time or event that was significant for you, your family or your community? Were they good experiences or negative ones? What did you learn about yourself and about God in those times?

Take a moment to prayerfully reflect on that moment. Remembering reminds us of our identity, of who we are.

READ | **DEUTERONOMY 6:20–23**

The Israelites developed a habit of remembering what God had done for them. They could look back and see that although they had once been slaves, God had faithfully brought them out of Egypt and into freedom. When their children began to ask why they were so committed to the laws and instructions of God, the adults could answer that the Lord had fulfilled His promises to them and they were faithful to Him in response. Crucially, this wasn't just something that happened now and again, this was a regular practice that was core to their cultural identity.

How often do you reflect back on your story with God and remember what He has done for you? Do you talk to others about the stories of God's work in your life?

Remembering also reminds us of whose we are, that we are God's.

When we are so regularly bombarded by external influences and the opinions of others, reinforcing our identity is crucial. Remembering stories of what God has done in our lives and who He says we are reminds us of our value and helps us combat spiritual attack.

What would your life look like if you always remembered whose you are? Do you ever ask others to encourage you with their stories of God at work? How might your community live differently if you all regularly remembered when God has worked in your life?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you have worked, and continue to work, all things together for good in my life. Thank you that I am yours. I'm sorry for the times when I have forgotten all that you have done for me and who you have made me to be. Help me to form the habit of remembering your faithfulness. Amen.

Session 2

Remembering our encounters with Jesus reminds us of who He is

In the busyness of life, it can be hard to pause and reflect on the ways we are growing in our knowledge of who Jesus is. What was one of your earliest encounters with Jesus? How have you encountered Him recently?

Take a moment to reflect on those encounters and what you've learnt about Jesus and yourself through them.

It's often in our reflective remembering that we realise the importance of something or someone.

READ | **LUKE 24:13–35**

We often think that if we'd lived alongside Jesus, it would be obvious to us who He is – after all, He is God. But the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus shows us that even those who physically walked alongside Jesus took a while to realise when He was active in their lives. It took an act of remembering what He had done to show them who He is.

The gospels show us how encounters with Jesus sometimes led to instant change (Luke 17:11-19) and sometimes led to gradual change (Luke 19:1-10). Do you remember when an encounter with Jesus led to an instant change? How about more gradual change?

Remembering what God has done in our lives means valuing both the miraculous and the mundane, recognising His presence with us at all times.

Go back to the encounters you remembered a few moments ago. Think about how you'd tell the people

around you about one of these #RememberWhen moments. How might your story encourage others in their journey of, or to, faith?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you led us to meet with you. Thank you that I am loved and saved by you. I'm sorry for the times when I have been slow to recognise your work in my life. Help me to remember when you have led me and changed me, and help me to share my stories with others. Amen.

Session 3

Spirit-filled communities are storytelling communities

Do you remember a time when you felt the Holy Spirit encourage you to share Jesus with someone... and you didn't do it?

Spend a moment asking God to release you of any guilt or disappointment from when you may have missed an opportunity to share Him.

The story of Jesus is powerful but requires boldness to share it.

READ | **ACTS 4:8-31**

When we look at Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, we can admire how clear and strong their witness to Jesus was. But we can also reflect that it was the Holy Spirit that led them to speak. The same Spirit of God who worked in Peter and John is at work in us, so how can we embody that boldness today?

Spend time praying for yourself and your community to grow in boldness to share the story of Jesus.

We need to be intentional about sharing our stories and asking God's Spirit to lead us in that.

As you think about the days and weeks ahead, what opportunities do you see for sharing stories of God at work in your life? Do those opportunities excite or scare you?

Thank God that His Spirit goes with you in every step, opening and guiding you through every opportunity to share your story.

PRAYER

God, thank you that you gave me your Holy Spirit as a guide, counsellor and helper. Increase in me a sense of your Spirit at work, and increase my boldness as I look for opportunities to share my story of you. Amen.

Session 4

Playing a part in God's story of evangelism

How confident do you feel to tell others your story of what God has done in your life? Think about the last time you spoke with someone about how God has been at work in your life.

Evangelism is not for specialists, it's a team sport for everyone.

READ | **JOHN 4:28-30, 39-42**

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we're good at one thing so we don't have to worry about things that others might be better at – like evangelism, perhaps. But the story of the woman at the well reminds us that God uses all of us to reach people with His story – unexpected people in unexpected ways. When you look back, is there anyone you remember who was an unexpected partner in sharing the gospel?

We've all got a story to tell and so we all have a part to play in evangelism. Take some time to reflect on the part you're playing – how can you make sure that you're finding ways to share Jesus through what you do?

All of us have different but equally important parts to play in God's adventure of evangelism.

Ask God if He has another part for you to play, or a different way to fulfil what He has called you to. Who could you share part of your story with this week?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you use all of us to share your story. When I feel like I can't do it, help me to remember that you have done amazing things in my life, and encourage me to share my story with others. Amen

A theology of remembering

When we glance over the narrative of scripture, especially through the lens of an instantaneous culture, we might not immediately spot the concept of remembering. Yet when we begin to look more closely through both the Old and New Testaments, we find that remembering is a recurring theme. The memories of God's steadfast love and past faithfulness created the foundation upon which the Israelites – and, subsequently, the early Christian community – understood their present reality and vision for the future.

The people of Israel celebrated various festivals throughout the year, often tied to historical encounters with God. As theologian John Drane outlines:

“The festival of Tabernacles recalled the temporary dwellings of Israel in the desert (Leviticus 23:33-44), while Weeks (Pentecost) was an occasion for reflecting more precisely on the giving of the Law in Sinai (Deuteronomy 16:12), and the weekly observation of a Sabbath rest was founded in the memory of how God also rested on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11).”¹

Yet the festival that was most closely connected to the importance of remembering God's faithfulness was the celebration of Passover. In Deuteronomy 16:1-8, the nation of Israel is instructed to celebrate the Passover in the same month that God rescued Israel from Egypt. The whole meal was a re-enactment, where people would dress up with sandals on their feet and sticks in their hands, recalling the experience of God bringing the Israelites out of their captivity. This annual occasion was a continual reminder that the present God of

Israel was the same God who rescued them out of Egypt. The meal did not only hark back to an incredible event in the nation's past that formed the identity of the people of Israel. Crucially, it also helped shape their present understanding of themselves as God's chosen people and their hope for God's continual faithfulness in the future.

“The story of the Exodus is the story of the Hebrew scriptures. From the focal point of the Exodus one looks back to the stories of the promises made to Israel's ancestors and forward to the narratives of Israel's life in the land. Even in exile, hope was nourished by evoking the memory of exodus. It is no accident that the story of the Exodus is the only story which the Torah instructs the people of Israel to retell. This story is central to their identity as God's people.”²

Alongside this key narrative of the Exodus we find another demonstration of the practice of remembering in the psalms (e.g. 105, 106, 136, 143), particularly the psalms of lament. In these psalms, we see how the psalmist would recite past acts of God's faithfulness during seasons when they felt forgotten by God. As Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann identifies: “Israel's historical recital is a stylised retelling of its past, and therefore an intentional shaping of the present and a passionate yearning for a specific future.”³ This process of remembering God's faithfulness is what carried the psalmist out of sorrow and into hope.

As we reflect on these passages, we start to see how obvious the theme is in the narrative passages of scripture. But it's not just in the stories; the practice of remembering is also found in some of the laws laid out in Deuteronomy. For example, fellow Hebrew

1 Drane, J., 'Remembrance: A biblical perspective,' Bible in Transmission, Bible Society journal, Summer 2014, p.12.

2 Newsom, C.A., 'Retelling the Story of the Exodus: Homiletical Resources for the Season after Pentecost', Quarterly Review 7.2: 71-100, 1987, p.71.

3 Brueggemann, W., Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991, p.29.

slaves were to be set free in the seventh year to remind the Israelites that they had been rescued from Egypt (Deuteronomy 15:12-15). Similarly, the Israelites were instructed to live justly towards the sojourners, the fatherless and the widows as an act of remembering the grace shown to them through freedom from slavery (Deuteronomy 24:17-18).⁴

Throughout their national life, worship and daily living, Israel was continually drawn back to remembering that they were rescued from slavery and brought into relationship with the God who delivered them. God's demonstration of His steadfast love and faithfulness through His acts of deliverance was what compelled them to worship and glorify Him in their daily lives. Yet, as is becoming clear, the "historical recitals in scripture are never simply about events in the past but are concerned with the dynamic encounter of present and past that grants new shape to both."⁵ To the people of Israel, remembering had a transcendent quality through which they knew God's faithfulness was absolutely the same yesterday, today and forever.

As we've seen throughout the Old Testament, remembering was woven into the DNA of Israel as a nation, and it's a theme that we find continued in the New Testament, centrally in Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper. Our earliest account of the celebration of the Lord's Supper is found in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, where the refrain "do this in remembrance of me" is repeated twice (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). This phrase also plays a central role in Luke's account of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:17-20), and while not mentioned directly by Matthew or Mark, there is an implication towards a similar theme.⁶

The importance of the act of remembering becomes even more apparent when we remember that Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper at a Passover meal, where He and the disciples were already in the act of remembering God's past faithfulness. At this very meal, Jesus then points forward to a new exodus that will occur through His death and resurrection, by which all of humanity can be rescued out of the

slavery of death and into new life in Christ. Indeed, the Passover was a "sacred meal with a distinct theological purpose. The backward historical glance would result in thankfulness to God, like the remembrance of the Lord's death in the communion service".⁷ In other words, the Lord's Supper was designed to have the same level of theological significance to God's people as the Passover had to the Israelites for generations.

In Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper, He is not doing away with the ancient practice of remembering past acts of God's faithfulness to help us reimagine our present reality and our hope for the future to come. Rather, Jesus is drawing our attention to the ultimate demonstration of God's steadfast love and faithfulness towards humanity seen in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus is giving the community of His followers a rhythm of remembering to ensure their identity and hope are solely based on God's love revealed in Jesus' death and resurrection. As Horton concludes, "The close bond between sign and signified in Passover is carried over into the New Testament celebration of the Lord's Supper."⁸

In light of this, how might the practice of remembering help to shape the identity of our own Christian communities? Well, it's possible to see one example in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to remember their lives before they were called to follow Jesus. He doesn't dwell on their past situations, however; instead, he points forward to who they are now becoming as a result of God's Spirit forming them into Christ-like disciples. The call to remember God's past acts of faithfulness in our lives is not simply to make us focus on what has already happened. Rather, the act of looking back is designed to propel us forward in our desire to live out the implications of our freedom in Christ and to share that freedom with others. Through the regular habit of remembering, we see how intrinsically our past shapes our current identity and the way we share our faith with others. Because if we don't remember, then how can we share?

4 Wolterstorff, N., 'The Art of Remembering,' *Journal of the Irish Christian Study Centre*, Vol 5 1994, p.4.

5 Ellington, S.A., 'The Reciprocal Reshaping of History and Experience in the Psalms: Interactions with Pentecostal Testimony,' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16.1, 2007, p.30

6 Drane, J., 'Remembrance: A biblical perspective,' *Bible in Transmission*, Bible Society journal, Summer 2014, p.13.

7 McFall, L., 'Sacred Meals,' in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p.751.

8 Horton, M., *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, p.799.

If you want to read more about sharing our stories of Jesus and how we witness effectively to Him, then here are a handful of books that we'd recommend...

Evangelism for a Skeptical World: How to make the unbelievable news about Jesus more believable by Sam Chan

Sam Chan provides an invaluable insight into western culture and how this cultural setting must shape our approach to evangelism. He offers a brilliant mix of cultural critique, theological thinking and practical examples to demonstrate what effective evangelism might look like today.

Honest Evangelism: How to talk about Jesus even when it's tough by Rico Tice

In our current cultural climate, it's not always easy to share our faith. Honest Evangelism is helpful because Rico Tice openly acknowledges this fact. Drawing on scripture, Tice offers an honest account of what it looks like to share our faith in the face of potential ridicule. This book doesn't seek to hide the challenges we face but it encourages us that there is joy to be found in a faithful Christian witness.

Out of the Saltshaker and into the World: Evangelism as a way of life by Rebecca Manley Pippert

Rebecca Pippert draws on decades of conversations about Christianity around the world to call and equip Christians to share Jesus through their day-to-day conversations. She shows that by leaning on our extraordinary God, such conversations can, and often do, have extraordinary results.

The Word's Out: Principles and strategies for effective evangelism today by David Male and Paul Weston

The Word's Out is an excellent book to get started with evangelism. Bringing together great scholarship with practical experience, you are presented with a picture of what New Testament evangelism looks like and how that can be worked out in our everyday practice in the 21st century.

STORY BEARER: HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR FRIENDS BY PHIL KNOX

Spending time with Phil, you always come away inspired by his love for Jesus and desire for others to know Him. His passion is infectious. In Story Bearer, Phil takes the reader by the hand and helps them to believe that God could use them to share Jesus with the people around them. It is thoughtful, creative and inspiring.

We hope these books will help you as you continue to inspire and equip your church to be passionate disciples of, and witnesses to, Jesus.



Remember when God...

Remembering as a Christian community

EXODUS | Deuteronomy 6:20–23

PASSOVER | Exodus 12:12–17

LORD'S SUPPER | 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

We have taken a thematic approach to the sermon outlines to help your congregation engage with the idea and outworking of remembering. Each sermon is rooted in biblical teaching, but the structure means that you may not be able to go into as much depth with each passage. If you would like to focus on one passage more heavily, we suggest using the passage in darker blue for each sermon.

SERMON OVERVIEW

This sermon introduces people to the idea that actively remembering is a key concept found throughout the Bible. It will lay the foundation for people to develop corporate and individual practices of remembering, both in their own discipleship and in their faith-sharing activities.

- Using biblical references of the Exodus, the Passover and the Last Supper, we recognise that we remember as an act of obedience, because God is consistent in His call for His people to remember who He is and what He has done.
- God calls us to remember because what we intentionally remember shapes who we are and how we act. For example, if we remember stories of God's faithfulness in the past, we are more likely to trust in God's faithfulness in the future.

- When we remember collectively and publicly, not only do we grow as a community in faith and love, but we also grow as witnesses, learning about God's character and our identity from each other's experiences.

Introduce the **#RememberWhen** sermon series to your church, including the small group resource if you are using that together as well. If appropriate, you might want to outline Jesus' call to be a witness to Him and how this resource can help us all do that better.

By the end of this teaching, people should be stirred to consider their own stories and how they can intentionally remember what God has done in their lives.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Share a personal story or significant memory, for example, birthday, wedding, baptism, bereavement.
- Ask the congregation what major events we remember and celebrate communally. For example, jubilee, millennium, Olympics, family wedding, birth, or holidays.

Perhaps encourage people to turn around and ask someone what those key memories are for them. How did they commemorate them, both as individuals and a community?

You may want to acknowledge that while the coronavirus pandemic shaped the way many of us remember our recent history, there are still many other markers in our lives that we have the privilege of commemorating.

AS A SOCIETY, WE REMEMBER BECAUSE IT REMINDS US OF WHO WE ARE. AS GOD'S PEOPLE, WE REMEMBER BECAUSE IT REMINDS US OF WHOSE WE ARE.



EXODUS

Actively remembering reminds us of God’s past faithfulness to us.

- Exodus is the defining event for Israel’s understanding of God and their own identity as a nation.
- Throughout the exile years, Moses regularly encourages the Israelites to remember the God who saved them whenever they wandered.
- Whatever our circumstances, the psalms demonstrate that we can remember God’s goodness in the past and these memories will increase our faith that He will deliver us again in the future (see Psalm 105).



“Even in exile, hope was nourished by evoking the memory of exodus. It is no accident that the story of the Exodus is the only story which the Torah instructs the people of Israel to retell. This story is central to their identity as God’s people.”

– Carol A. Newsom, biblical scholar

PASSOVER

Through our shared habit of remembering, we grow as a community of faith and love.

- As a nation, Israel is encouraged to remember the day when God rescued them from Egypt, particularly through the celebration of Passover.
- This act of remembering at Passover was not simply recollecting the past, but it also involved reimagining the present so that God’s character, as revealed in the Exodus, could continue to shape the present and future stories of His people.
- Regularly remembering God’s faithfulness as a community can help us better understand His character, so that we can love and trust Him more in the future.



“Unless we remember, we cannot understand.”

– E. M. Forster, novelist

LAST SUPPER

Participating in this act of remembering as a community reminds us of who Jesus is and who we are in Him.

- The public act of remembering through communion enables us to witness to God's enduring love and faithfulness.
- Just as the Israelites remembered God's deliverance through Passover, Jesus introduces a new act of remembrance based on His own death and resurrection. (Luke 22:13-19)
- Paul uses this new Lord's Supper to pass on what he has learnt about Jesus and calls the early church to regularly do the same as a community. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- The Lord's Supper is now a wonderful reminder that, through Jesus' death and resurrection, all of us can receive God's deliverance like the Israelites.

'Production effect': The University of Waterloo (Canada) discovered that saying things out loud increases our ability to remember them. Therefore, telling others about God's goodness helps us remember it too!

If you feel it appropriate, you might want to reflect on the coronavirus pandemic as a hugely influential experience for both the church and the world. Many churches around the world have continued to selflessly love and support their communities in a time of crisis. Although great hardship has been

caused by the pandemic, it's important for us to reflect on the ways God has been faithful and how He has revealed His purpose for the church in different seasons.

Remembering is a key theme in the Bible. What we remember helps define who we are. We cannot become what we forget.

- Thinking about your life, how would you finish the question, "I remember when God...?"
- Are you facing a situation where remembering God's past faithfulness could give you a new perspective?
- As a community, how do we develop a culture of 'remembering when' to help us grow in our love for God?
- How might these stories of God at work start to spill out from us as a community to others around us?

SUMMARY

From the Exodus to the Passover to the Last Supper, we are called to be a people who remember God's faithfulness in the past so that we grow our love for Him today and trust in Him tomorrow.

SMALL GROUP WEEK 1: We'll use the example of the Israelites to explore how we remember God's faithfulness to us as a community and as individuals.



Remember when Jesus...

Valuing our encounters with Jesus

ROAD TO EMMAUS | Luke 24:13–35

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND | John 9

SERMON OVERVIEW

The purpose of this sermon is to encourage people to consider their personal stories of encountering Jesus and recognise the significance of those encounters for themselves and others.

- We each have different experiences of encountering Jesus, and we can often forget or dismiss our own stories as being irrelevant or unimportant to other people. But encountering Jesus is always significant and often carries significance for others who hear our stories.
- Sometimes it is only in our retrospective reflections that we realise the activity of God in our circumstance. Telling the story can reveal its significance.
- Deliberately and intentionally remembering encounters with Jesus helps us grow in awareness of what God is doing in the ordinary and every day moments of our lives.

By the end of the teaching, people should be encouraged to reflect on their own stories of encounter and ask God who might need to hear their story.

#REMEMBERWHEN

Recap last week's message that we are a people who are called to remember when God has been faithful to us, as this shapes our identity.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Share a memory of an event that is important in hindsight, but that you may not have realised the significance of at the time, such as a wedding day that flew by or a conversation with a friend that turned out to be pivotal.
- Encourage the congregation to think of a situation where they didn't grasp the full significance of what happened until afterwards.
- We can often downplay our own stories of encountering Jesus, but we see a whole variety of different ways people encountered Jesus in the gospels. In the same way, reflecting on how we've encountered Jesus helps us to better value those encounters and recall Jesus' ongoing significance in our lives.

IT'S OFTEN IN OUR REFLECTIVE REMEMBERING THAT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN EVENT BECOMES CLEAR TO US

INSTANT TRANSFORMATION

The gospels are full of #RememberWhen moments.

- Jesus' ministry was defined by instant, life-transforming encounters with others, not only by His teaching.
- Whether it was healing the blind (Luke 9), the lepers (Luke 17:11-19), or raising people from the dead (John 11:1-46), encounters with Jesus were often moments of dramatic significance.
- These were miraculous encounters that couldn't be explained in human terms, giving those involved a great opportunity to share what Jesus had done for them. (Luke 9:25)



GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION

Life transformation doesn't always happen immediately; it can often take time and reflection.

- Moments of instant transformation are wonderful testaments to God's power, but they are not always the norm. We must not discount the stories of God at work over time.
- While we don't have an entirely conclusive timeline for Acts, it is believed that the events in the book took place over 30 years. Even the early church did not always experience instant transformation.
- If you hear **#RememberWhen** stories and think, "that's never happened in my life", the good news is that there are all different kinds of encounter with God, many of which are much more gradual or less obvious; for instance, both Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21, John 19:39) had ongoing conversations with Jesus.

Did you know that there were approximately 8 years between Peter's sermon at Pentecost and the vision on the rooftop in Acts 10? Even for Peter, transformation was gradual.

REFLECTIVE TRANSFORMATION

Sometimes our expectations of God can leave us disheartened after encounters with Him... until we take time to reflect.

- The disciples were downcast because of their mistaken expectations of Jesus, but He was there even though they didn't realise it.
- It wasn't until they looked at the scriptures and broke bread together – an act of remembering – that they realised the magnitude of their encounter on the road.

- Often, it's only when we look back at situations, particularly difficult ones, that we see the power of Jesus' presence in our lives, working when we weren't aware. For example, many of us have been disheartened by the events of the global pandemic, but when we reflect on what we prayed for at the beginning of 2020, are there prayers that God answered in very unexpected ways through the coronavirus pandemic? Were there encounters we had with Him or gifts that He drew out of us that might not have happened otherwise?

Remembering what God has done in our lives means valuing both the miraculous and the mundane, recognising His presence with us at all times.

- Are there any encounters in the gospels that resonate with you?
- How would you describe your first encounter with God?
- How do you recognise the presence of Jesus in your life when things don't turn out as expected?
- As a church, how can we build each other up with testimonies of Jesus at work in our lives?

SUMMARY

When we reflect on it, all of us have stories of what God has done in our lives. From the miraculous to the mundane, all of these **#RememberWhen** moments of God's presence are valuable and worth sharing.

SMALL GROUP WEEK 2: Content will look at examples of encounters with Jesus and explore how we value different encounters in our own lives.

Remember when the Spirit...

Spirit-filled communities are storytelling communities

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN
Acts 4:8–31

SERMON OVERVIEW

This sermon is designed to introduce people to the role of the Holy Spirit in our community as disciples of and witnesses to Jesus.

- Sharing stories of God's faithfulness increases faith levels within our communities.
- It is important for us to recognise the role of the Spirit in moving from remembering stories of God's faithfulness to sharing them.
- As we share with one another, a culture of bold storytelling emerges and we develop a desire to pray for greater boldness in our witness.

By the end of this teaching, the congregation should understand the importance of retelling stories of God's faithfulness and of praying for the Spirit's boldness to share them.

#REMEMBERWHEN

Recap last week's message that there are many different ways we can encounter Jesus, but all of them are valuable and worth sharing.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Share a time when you've experienced something so good, you couldn't help but tell other people about it.
- Encourage the congregation to remember a situation where they couldn't help but share an experience they'd had.
- Evangelism can have the unhelpful caricature that it's about forcing ourselves to tell others about Jesus. Conversely, the idea of telling stories about something or someone we love can drastically change our understanding of evangelism.

REMEMBERING STORIES OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS GROWS FAITH WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY AND CAUSES US TO BECOME MORE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT'S LEADING IN OUR LIVES.

BOLD STORIES

The church community in Acts is formed around the continual retelling of the gospel story and how that story was spreading.

- Acts 4 offers a brilliant insight into how the first disciples witnessed to Jesus.
- Acts demonstrates a model of evangelism that is simply a natural response to our encounters with Jesus, and isn't dependent on our own knowledge or ability.
- Peter and John were recognised as unschooled and ordinary men who had spent time with Jesus (Acts 4:13), but they could not stop speaking about the things they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20).
- The story of Jesus that they had witnessed was so transformational that they had to share it.

- Similarly, the stories of what God has done in our lives today are bold and transformational. All of them point to the same Jesus who Peter and John were telling people about.
- What are the stories we're sharing when we spend time together? Do we really believe that the stories we have as a community are bold and life-changing?



“Evangelism is not a specialised activity for just a few experts, but is for everyone as they live out their everyday lives empowered by the risen Jesus.”

– Male and Weston, *The Word's Out*, p.138

BOLD PRAYERS

Habitually remembering the story of Jesus reminds us to pray for the boldness to share it.

- We may well think, “I’m not like Peter and John; I can very easily not speak about what I’ve seen and heard.”
- The end of chapter 4 offers a response to our lack of confidence: Peter and John share the story of what’s happened with the community, then they all pray for greater boldness. Even the early church that’d met Jesus first-hand were still dependent on God’s Spirit to help them witness to Him.
- Throughout Acts, we see that the early church was dependent on the Spirit for boldness and for guidance as the believers witnessed to Jesus.
- How bold are we being in our prayer life?



“Acts tells the exciting story of how the Spirit led the early Jesus community to respond creatively and continually in new and surprising situations as it preached the gospel”

– Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, Orbis Books, 2009, p.1

BOLD WITNESSES

The stories we tell shape the culture of our community and can raise our faith to see God work through us.

- Peter and John telling the story of what happened in Acts 4 emboldens the whole community.

- The combination of storytelling and prayer can have the same effect for our community today.
- As we share and pray with one another, this cultivates a culture of bold storytelling and witnessing to Jesus. We start to become more like Peter and John, who cannot help but speak about the things they’ve seen and heard.
- While not all of us may have the gift of the evangelist, we do all have the call to witness to who we know Jesus is.
- Much like Peter and John in their day, perhaps we all know someone in our community who is bold in sharing their faith. How can their stories of boldness encourage and challenge us to go and do the same?

In a courtroom, a lawyer knows all the ins and outs of a case, and sometimes we think we need to have the same level of knowledge when we share Jesus. Instead, we are called to be witnesses – we just need to say what we’ve seen and heard.

We need to be intentional about creating space to pray for boldness and share our #RememberWhen stories with each other

- How regularly are we sharing stories of God’s faithfulness with one another?
- How can we create more space to facilitate storytelling in our communities?
- Are we making space to pray that the Spirit would make us bold witnesses?
- How could we develop our culture so that we are ready to #RememberWhen if God’s Spirit prompts us?

SUMMARY

The stories we share in our community shape our culture. As we share more stories of God’s faithfulness and pray together for boldness, our faith and courage increase, so that we can’t help but speak about the things we’ve seen and heard.

SMALL GROUP WEEK 3: Content will look at examples of the early church being obedient to God’s Spirit, and how we can grow to do the same.

Remember when we...

Playing a part in God's adventure of evangelism

WOMAN AT THE WELL | John 4:28–30, 39–42

SERMON OVERVIEW

In this teaching, we will explore the idea that we all have a part to play in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. We often have a limited and fixed view of who can evangelise and what an evangelist looks like. Through the simple act of sharing our experiences of Jesus, however, we can all play our part in God's adventure of evangelism.

- God repeatedly uses people you would least expect to partner with Him.
- Despite the woman at the well's shame (as evidenced by the timing she chose to collect water from the well), after her encounter with Jesus she was compelled to tell people what had happened.
- Her storytelling posed a question. She didn't offer certainty or have all the answers, but she enabled others to seek out Jesus for themselves.
- Our own stories can be a small part of someone else's journey. They can fuel and propel another person towards Jesus – perhaps for the first time.

By the end of the sermon, people are encouraged to consider: How can I share my story and help someone ask themselves, "If God has been faithful to them, maybe God will be faithful to me"?

#REMEMBERWHEN

Recap last week's message that our stories of Jesus are worth sharing, and the Spirit can give us the boldness to do so.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Share a story of an unexpected person being influential or a story where a successful outcome involved more than one person.

Examples of unexpected heroes:

- In 1944, 8-year-old Tony Foulds witnessed a US pilot choose to crash into trees to save the lives of Foulds and his friends playing in a nearby field, subsequently killing the 10 American troops aboard. Since 1969, Foulds has gone almost every day to tidy their memorial, where BBC Breakfast presenter Dan Walker spotted him. Walker shared the amazing story, and a flypast was organised in honour of the 10 men who gave their lives and the young boy who kept their memory alive.
- During lockdown, many people will have heard about unexpected hero Captain Sir Thomas Moore, who started with a reasonable goal of raising £1000 for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday. As Moore's story gathered public attention, however, more and more money came flooding in, and by the end of his laps, Captain Tom had raised over £30m for the NHS. Now renowned as a national hero, even receiving a knighthood from the Queen, Captain Tom captured the spirit of the nation to do something kind for others even in hard times.

As we've thought about our own **#RememberWhen** moments and the way they've affected our whole lives, hopefully it's made us realise that God works in many different ways through all kinds of people.

**EVANGELISM IS NOT FOR THE SPECIALIST,
IT'S A TEAM SPORT FOR EVERYONE**

UNEXPECTED WITNESSES

We often have a particular picture of the type of person God works through. The Bible shows us that we've all got a part to play.

- Scripture is full of God using unexpected people: Moses came up against Pharaoh, Rahab helped the spies, and Peter was the hot-headed disciple who denied Jesus but on whom Jesus built His church.
- Jesus Himself was unexpected: God's Son chose to take on flesh, to humble Himself and take the form of a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth – as Philip says, “Nothing good has ever come from Galilee”.
- Let's consider the story of the woman at the well. Jews and Samaritans hated each other, so it was scandalous for Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi, to be speaking with a Samaritan woman. Not only that, but the woman was collecting water in the heat of the day – she wasn't just socially distancing, her actions suggest that she was marginalised by her community and avoided any interaction with them.
- Despite all of this, the woman forgets her shame after her encounter with Jesus and runs off to tell her village about Him. God uses an outcast Samaritan woman to be one of the first people to witness to Jesus.
- How often do we allow how we feel about ourselves to dictate our service to God, rather than what God says about us?



“God wants to use us as we are and not as we think we should be. God wants to work through our character, background, personality and interests... We don't have to become someone else or a caricature of ourselves before we can be involved in God's adventure of evangelism.”

– *Male & Weston, The Word's Out, p.159*

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

The woman at the well reminds us that God can do far more with what we bring to Him than we could ever expect.

- When the Samaritan woman runs to the town, she asks, “Could this be the Messiah?”. She doesn't have all the answers, but she still invites people to come and meet Jesus for themselves.
- As a result of the woman's testimony, many of the Samaritans encountered Jesus for themselves and chose to believe Jesus was the Messiah – something the disciples never would have expected. Are there people who we would never expect to encounter Jesus?
- Although the woman was likely to fear people's reactions, the person of Jesus who she had encountered was too good not to share, and she became one of the first people in the church's legacy of witnessing to Jesus. Her unexpected encounter with Jesus gave her the courage to trust God fully with the outcome of sharing Him.
- Perhaps share times when God did more than you expected, or when you doubted He would come through in a situation.



“I didn't think my story could do so much, but God showed me that anything I surrender to Him, no matter how small or insignificant, in our Saviour's arms it can change nations.”

– *Lee, interview for Great Commission*



UNEXPECTED COMMUNITY

In order for others to hear about Jesus, we all need to play our part in sharing our own encounters with Him.

- The woman at the well might have been an unexpected choice, but she shared what she knew of Jesus and invited others to come and meet Him for themselves.
 - Each of our encounters with Jesus will be different to anyone else's, and therefore will resonate with a variety of different people. If we want our culture to have a clearer picture of who Jesus is, we all need to share what we've seen of Him.
 - In any healthy team, everyone has a different role to play and all are equally important. As you share your #RememberWhen moments, they may not provoke an instant response, but they could be part of the gradual transformation God is doing in someone's life.
- What stories have you remembered of your relationship with God during this sermon series?
 - What expectations do you have when you share your faith?
 - Who has God laid on your heart that you would love to see encounter Jesus?
 - Who might we have written-off in our evangelism, because we're not sure how they might respond?

We want to give everyone the opportunity to meet Jesus and become part of his wonderful family – no one is beyond the reach of the gospel.

SUMMARY

The woman at the well encourages us that God uses unexpected people to be His witnesses. All of us have different but equally important parts to play in God's adventure of evangelism. Together we can make Jesus known.

SMALL GROUP SESSION 4: Our final session uses the example of the woman at the well to encourage us that we're able to share our #RememberWhen moments.



evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known 

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