

Talking About Mission

How?

How do we talk about our faith to other people? It can be especially difficult when we don't know if somebody has a faith, or if they are even interested in exploring faith.

The development of support structures is a sign of love for one another and a way that we can reach people in a gentle way.

Religious spirituality has been positively associated with the alleviation of mental health illnesses. We need to care for people's spirits!¹

This might just be that we are given - and give others - the opportunity to share emotions and feelings. Much of our human communication does not get past generalities about the weather, the football scores, or local news. Fellowship requires getting beyond these levels, enabling people to get in touch with themselves, their feelings, their hopes and fears, and to share them, if they wish to.² We discover trust, the loving acceptance of ourselves and our neighbour.

An example might be how we interact within a house group, which enables individuals to discover hidden potential and creativity within themselves, aspects of the image of God in which we were created.³

Talking Points:

- When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation about something deeper than everyday life?
- What helps you feel safe enough to share honestly?
- Why do you think it can be difficult to talk about faith in everyday life?
- How might we open up gentle, respectful conversations about belief or spirituality with others?
- What's one small act of kindness or presence that has meant a lot to you recently?

¹ Swinton, *Finding Jesus in the Storm*, 35

² Powell, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?*

³ Matthew and Scott, *Leading God's People*, 64

- Have you experienced support from others in a way that felt spiritual or healing?
- What might it look like to build “support structures” in your community that reflect love and care?

Unity

"Draw the Circle Wide" is a phrase often used in the context of ecumenical mission. It refers to the idea of expanding the scope of concern and engagement in mission and church unity to embrace a wider range of individuals and communities. The question of unity has always been a matter of concentric circles, with the call to unity extending its horizons ever outward. Mission and unity, it has become clear, belong together – like two sides of one coin.⁴

The Church of Scotland believes that God calls us to celebrate and unite with other Christian denominations, both in Scotland and throughout the world. The Church, therefore, works ecumenically, wherever possible, engaging with other churches in a variety of ways at local, national, and international levels.⁵

The union of Church of Scotland churches as part of the Presbytery plan also means that church communities are required to come together to adapt and to develop a mission strategy that covers more diverse areas.

Talking Points:

- What does “Draw the Circle Wide” mean to you in the context of community and faith?
- Can you think of a time when unity made something possible that you couldn’t have done alone?

⁴ Ross, “Draw the Circle Wide,” *International Review of Mission*

⁵ The Church of Scotland, “Ecumenical Relations - Relations with Other Churches.”

Church

Community and social life are the foundation upon which all belief is built. Evangelism is not sufficient, in itself, to hold and develop Scots in the faith. “The culture of Church is so alien to non-Christians that it forces them to choose between it and ‘normal’ culture.”⁶

Does “church” have to be a building? The emerging Pioneer Minister roles within the Church of Scotland are often based within a community setting. Could the fellowship and the development of support structures we have talked about start with providing hot drinks at a community football tournament, or a bake sale at a school fair? Do we have to be overt about our faith at the start of these conversations?

The church is not the starting point. Rather, God’s mission, God’s purpose of life, is the starting point and provides the church with its definition and calling: “In this perspective it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church. Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God’s salvation in this world.”⁷

By going deep into the culture of his own particular people, Christ revealed a Gospel for every culture. The ministry of Paul and the apostles taught that, because of the righteousness of Jesus, any culture could be redeemed. There is no universal cultural expression of the Gospel, but rather, a Gospel that must be universalised to every culture.⁸

Talking Points:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “church”? Is it a building, an event, a community?
- In what creative or unexpected places have you seen “church” happen?
- How might we bring fellowship and mission into familiar community spaces like fairs, matches or cafés?

⁶ Fraser, *Mission in Contemporary Scotland*, 157

⁷ Keum, “Conference on World Mission and Evangelism Report,” *International Review of Mission*.

⁸ Fraser, *Mission in Contemporary Scotland*, 163

Playing to our Strengths

How can we use our strengths in mission?

“God, please give me guidance in the best way to glorify You with this gift. I pray that through my strengths, others would be able to see You and know that I am Yours. Please open my eyes to opportunities to use my gift to spread the Gospel.”⁹

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” (Psalm 139:14 (NIV))

Talking Points:

- What’s something you’re naturally good at or passionate about?
- How could you imagine using that gift in service to others or in building relationships?
- Can strengths like listening, organising, cooking, or storytelling be part of “mission”?

Change or Status Quo

Disciples, by the nature of their calling, are in the business of transformation. They are not content to settle for the status quo but are ready to invest themselves in changing it in light of the vision created by the promises of God.¹⁰ So, how much should we be looking to change others? What would it look like to really listen to God in our mission - letting Him lead - rather than feeling like it’s all on us to convince people or get them to church?

Talking Points:

- How do we know when it’s time to change something in our lives or community?
- What’s one way we can listen more for God’s guidance, rather than relying only on ourselves?
- Are we sometimes too focused on convincing others, instead of simply showing love and trust?

⁹ Collins, “9 Steps to Glorify God with Your Gifts,” Focus on the Family.

¹⁰ Ross, “Draw the Circle Wide,” *International Review of Mission*

Quiet moments

The Weaver Poem *by Grant Colfax Tullar (1869-1950)*

My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colours
He weaveth steadily.

Of't times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I the underside.

Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

Talking Points:

- What does the poem *The Weaver* say to you about life's challenges and purpose?
- Can you think of a time when something that didn't make sense later proved to be meaningful?
- Where have you seen or experienced "mission" in action recently – even if no one called it that?
- What's one small step you could take to bring more care, connection or faith into your daily life?

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