

## Prayer and Collect

In your prayer time, pray for one another to have eyes to see, ears to hear and the spirit of discernment throughout life.

*Lord Jesus,  
you send us out into your world  
to be your witnesses  
in the things we say and do.  
Grant us the help of the Holy Spirit  
that we may point people to your love,  
and so bring glory to you. Amen.*

## Looking ahead

Using a journal, notebook or your phone, jot down anything that strikes you when experiencing the surrounding culture this week, whether it's watching films, TV programmes or YouTube videos; listening to the radio; and so on. What are the points of connection with or disconnection from the Christian message? How could you talk to someone about that from your perspective as a witness?

## Reflections for individuals

Readings for this week

**Monday** = *Genesis 1.1-5; 26-31*  
**Tuesday** = *Ruth 1.6-18*  
**Wednesday** = *Matthew 15.21-28*  
**Thursday** = *Acts 10.1-33*  
**Friday** = *Philippians 4.4-9*

# EVERYDAY WITNESS

# 6

## 6: Engaging with the Place of Witness

### Collect

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### Icebreaker

Have you ever experienced the sense of God speaking to you or encouraging you through someone or something that wasn't explicitly religious? It could have been advice from a friend or family member that was particularly wise; a line in a film or moment in a piece of music that resonated; a piece of art that highlighted something of the goodness of God; or the emotion of shared euphoria at a sports event.

Or

Can you think of times when you've seen the beauty of creation and it has helped shape your understanding of who God is and the good news of Jesus?

### Discussion

The theologian Colin Gunton writes: 'Wherever there is truth, goodness and beauty; wherever things turn out to be what they are created to be, there is to be experienced the work of the perfecting Spirit.' What do people think about this quote? How might the idea behind this shape our everyday witness?

## Introducing the theme (read aloud)

Do you remember the hidden leopards in Johannesburg from Session 3? Can you remember how many leopards were found? It was seven; six 'hidden leopards' and one escapee, for those interested. This week, we're delving further into the idea of finding the hidden leopards around us. Throughout this course, we've focused on witnessing about what God has done and is doing, in and through our lives, and sharing that story with others. Another aspect of being witnesses is sharing what we see God is doing in and around us or 'engaging with the place of witness'.

Conversations about religion and faith don't come up in conversation all that regularly. For many people, they are topics that just aren't on their everyday radar. This may lead us to think that we have to crowbar our faith into conversations, which may result in an awkward response from others. It's easy to look for moments to say something about our faith rather than listening intently to the people and places around us. This can make us poor conversation partners and worse witnesses.

Sam Chan, in his book *Evangelism in a Skeptical\* World* (\*US spelling!), writes about how the majority of our conversations in life focus on our interests. Particularly in Western culture, we're very happy talking about the news, weather (particularly in England), sport, music, film, TV and so on. The challenge is that many of these interests don't appear to have natural links with ideas of faith. This is because faith and religion draw us from external interests to explore our own values and, ultimately, our world views (the lenses through which we understand all the reality). This distinction between interests, value and world views highlights the crucial role of being witnesses who listen well and ask good questions.

Engaging with the place of witness begins with learning to listen to the people and culture around us, and beginning to understand the values and world views that underpin both what people are interested in and what is popular in culture. We can do so by asking good questions. For example, if someone is a keen runner, we can ask what it is the

person values about running and see where the conversation goes. The evangelist Mark Greenwood talks about the importance of seeking to converse with people, not convert people. As we start to know and understand the people around us better, we can begin to witness about we think God's Spirit is already doing in their lives and where we see the image of God in them. Alternatively, if we are talking about a film or TV show, we can look for the connection points with the gospel in that movie or programme.

## Reading

### *Acts 17:16-34*

In this passage, we see Paul offering one example of listening to the culture he finds himself in and seeking a way to connect with that culture. At the start of the reading, Paul is greatly distressed because Athens is full of idols. At first glance, it might look as if there is no connection here with the good news of Jesus. However, in verse 22, Paul says to the people of Athens, 'I see how extremely religious you are in every way'. Despite his distress at the culture, he finds a point of connection.

**Activity** (You might like to break into smaller groups for this activity.)

- 1 What do we like / dislike about the idea of discovering connection points with the culture and people around us?
- 2 What are your own interests, and which values and world views underpin those interests?
- 3 When have we felt similarly distressed about the culture surrounding us?
- 4 What are some of the connection points for our culture?

If you have time, ask people to share which current TV shows they enjoy watching. Spend some time reflecting on those programmes. What do they like about them? What are the values being communicated through the shows? Where are the points of connection with the good news of Jesus? Are there any points of conflict with the gospel?