

Prayer and Collect

Share any updates about the five people you have been praying for, and pray together for them.

*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

We will soon be coming to an end of the Everyday Witness programme. During the coming week, think about what you have learned and how you plan to keep growing as a witness when the course is over.

Reflections for individuals

Readings for this week

Monday = Acts 8.4-13
Tuesday = 2 Samuel 11
Wednesday = Luke 22.14-20
Thursday = Acts 2.14-36
Friday = Luke 10.1-9

EVERYDAY WITNESS

7

7: The Power of Story

Icebreaker

What is your favourite story and why?

Collect

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Introducing the theme (read aloud)

Stories and telling stories are fundamental to human relationships. We tell our own and other peoples' stories, we read biographies, and we watch biopic films or YouTube videos. When you think of the stories of others, what are the things that make them memorable? Spend a few minutes thinking about a story that you found memorable and why, and then share with others in the group. Nominate a 'scribe' to make a shared list of what makes a person's story worth telling, remembering and retelling.

Reading

Acts 9:1-19, Acts 22:3-21, Acts 26:2-23

Luke tells Paul's story three times in the book of Acts.

1 What are the key features of Paul's testimony? Do any of these features connect with or relate the list you made earlier?

2 What do you find powerful about the stories? What makes them 'work'?

Discussion

The first time we hear the story of Paul's conversion (in Acts 9), it is told to us by Luke, the narrator of Acts? The second and third times, we hear the story from the lips of Paul himself. The story in Acts 9 is one of a series of stories about people coming to faith in Jesus (Simon the greedy magician in Acts 8; the Ethiopian eunuch, also in Acts 8; Saul (Paul) the persecutor as we've just read; and Cornelius the Roman in Acts 10).

The second telling of Paul's conversion in Acts 22 comes after he has been arrested by the Roman 's in the temple and the Roman commander allows him to address his fellow Jews.

The third telling, in Acts 26, is Paul speaking, as a Roman citizen, to the Roman authorities in the person of King Agrippa and his court. Think about these different situations and context.

3 What are the similarities and what are the differences about the ways Paul's story is told?

Here are some pointers:

- Paul tells his story with considerable courage (notice the results in Acts 22:22-24).
- In Luke 12:11-12, Jesus reassures his followers that even though they will be dragged before rulers and authorities, the Holy Spirit will teach them what to say to defend themselves. In Acts 22 and

26, Luke shows us how this is worked out in the life of Paul, as he gives his testimony.

- Paul clearly tailors his story to his audience. So he speaks in Aramaic, the language commonly spoken by the Jews at that time (Acts 22:2), calls his audience 'brothers and sisters' (v1) and says of himself, 'I am a Jew' (v3). But, when speaking with King Agrippa, he explains aspects of Judaism that might not be clear to his audience (for example, he calls the Pharisees the 'strictest sect of our religion' in Acts 26:5).

Activity

In pairs, spend 5 minutes each telling your story of coming to faith. Now talk with each other about the people you encounter in your daily life. Explain how you might shape your story for those people so that, when you have an opportunity to share it, they can receive it in a way that makes sense to them.