

A short discipleship course

Session 1

GOD: CREATOR AND FATHER

Nothing could be more stunning than our planet, or more amazing than the universe. Astronomers, cosmologists and geologists have made so many discoveries about our planet, the solar system, our galaxy and beyond, and will make many more. Biologists and botanists have also discovered so much about animals, human beings and plants.

What could be more beautiful than a snowflake or a rose? What could be more extraordinary than the human brain?

We should thank God for their discoveries – science and religion are not opposed. Scientists seek to work out WHAT and HOW but through Christianity we find out WHO and WHY.

The first two chapters in the Bible tell us that God is creator of the heavens and the earth.

Here is an example of the beautiful poetic description of creation from Genesis chapter 1:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day’, and the darkness he called ‘night’. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

And God said, ‘Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.’ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault ‘sky’. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry ground ‘land’, and the gathered waters he called ‘seas’. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.’ And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.”

The important thing is that, whatever means God used, he is the Creator. Genesis chapter 1 paints the bigger picture and Genesis chapter 2 majors on human beings. It is tragic that many people today have lost the understanding of God as Creator.

St Paul wrote: *“Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse”* (Romans 1:20).

If people think there is no God, no Creator, then, apart from human laws, which can be changed or be oppressive, they can behave how they like.

But if there is a Creator-God, that changes everything:

- He is all-powerful.
- He made us in his image and gave us a conscience.

But the God Christians believe in is not an oppressive dictator. He told us he is:

LOVE

Jesus called God his Father and taught us to do the same.

GOD the Creator is also our Heavenly Father

You may have had a happy childhood with a loving father. **Or** you may have had a difficult relationship with your father. Either way, no human father is perfect, but God loves you perfectly.

Let's say the Lord's prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Session 2

JESUS: TEACHER, HEALER, SON OF GOD

TEACHER

Jesus Christ made an impact as soon as he began his public ministry in Galilee (in the North of what is now Israel) at the age of 30. Crowds followed him wherever he went and were amazed by his teaching. They said 'No-one ever spoke like this man'.

Here are two examples of his **teaching**:

- *"Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable are you than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" (Luke 12: 24-26)*
- *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5: 7-9).*

He also told lots of **stories** (parables) to make a memorable point. Examples of his stories are the Prodigal Son; the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep.

The parable of the lost sheep (often known as the parable of the Good Shepherd) is about a shepherd who left his 99 sheep to go and look for one that was lost – he found it and brought it back to the rest of the flock, full of joy that he had rescued it.

What do you think was the meaning of that story?

HEALER

Wherever Jesus went he performed miracles of healing. The blind were healed; the lame walked; fevers were banished; those disturbed in their spirits were set free; he even raised three people from the dead (Jairus's daughter; a widow's son and Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha).

When Jesus began his ministry he preached in a synagogue, giving his **'Mission Statement'**:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4: 18-19).

SON OF GOD

Gradually the disciples came to believe that Jesus was the Christ. That means the Jewish Messiah whom God promised in Old Testament writings to be the one who would come to bring freedom and salvation to Israel. They hoped Jesus would set their country free from Roman rule.

But as Jesus did even more amazing miracles - such as feeding 5000 people with only 5 small loaves and two small fish; then standing up in a boat to still a raging storm with only a word – they came to realise he was even more than the Messiah.

On one occasion, before the crucifixion and resurrection, he was transformed before their eyes into a glorious being. (Mark 9:2-10).

After the resurrection they began to worship him as the Son of God. Later the New Testament writers began to explain what we call the doctrine of the Trinity – that God is three in one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Have you come to see that Jesus was more than a great man? Have you reached the point where you believe he is the Son of God?

If so, why not join in this prayer:

Father God, I want to thank you for the wonderful teaching that Jesus gave; I praise you for his great miracles; like the disciples I see that he is more than a great man – I want to tell you my faith that he is your Son. Help me to grow in understanding more about Jesus from your Word and help me to follow him and trust him

Session 3

HUMAN BEINGS: MIRACLE, PROBLEM, SOLUTION

- What could be more amazing than a human being – so complex, so beautiful, capable of extraordinary achievements – and the only ‘animal’ species that shows any evidence of worshipping God.

God created us to have a loving relationship with Himself and one another. Just imagine a world full of love!

- Human beings ruined all that by sin, which means falling short of God’s ways or even rebelling against him.

Here is a list from one verse in the Bible about only a few sins: ‘Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.’(Matthew 15: 19).

Sin starts in the human heart but can multiply to ruin a whole nation.

Behind sin is the Devil whose mission is to turn human beings against God – he even tempted Jesus to sin, but Jesus was the only one to resist him completely.

The Bible says:

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3: 23)

We may not think we have sinned in a big way, but all of us fail in thought, word and action. So mankind was in a mess and deserved only God’s judgment.

BUT God himself provided the solution to the problem:

- **He came to the world in the person of his Son:**
- **From the age of 30 Jesus taught and healed thousands of people**
- **This stirred up the opposition – the Religious and Roman leaders**
- **He was arrested, beaten, tried unjustly and condemned to a terrible death – crucifixion**
- **On the cross Jesus endured hell – the absence of God. He cried out ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ But that was all part of God’s plan – that he should endure hell in our place.**
- **The cross bridged the gulf between God and human beings**

Our response:

Some shake their fist at the cross

Some walk away

Others respond in repentance and faith

Repentance = confessing sin and asking God's help to turn away from it

Faith = putting your trust in God for time and eternity

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6: 23). "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3: 16)

A prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for finding the solution to sin, by sending your Son to die in my place. I am truly sorry for all my sins and turn away from them. I humbly ask for your forgiveness. I now turn to you in simple trust in your Son, Jesus Christ. Please restore my broken relationship with you and grant me the gift of eternal life now and forever, Amen.

Session 4

THE RESURRECTION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Resurrection

"When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it. Afterwards Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either. Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it'" (Mark 16: 9-15; 19-20).

Through the resurrection Jesus triumphed over sin, death and hell.

Jesus was not just raised from the dead back to this life, but he was given a new body, in some ways resembling his former body, but it was eternal and can never be destroyed again. Although he made breakfast for his disciples after the resurrection, he could also pass through closed doors and appear and disappear. But he still had the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, to remind the disciples of his death for them.

St. Paul tells us that all those who believe in Jesus will be 'clothed' in an eternal body after death. In the next life there will be no more suffering or pain or tears.

Jesus ascended into heaven but promised two things:

- He would send the Holy Spirit
- One day he will come again in glory to bring about justice for all and create a new heaven and earth

The Trinity

All the disciples were Jewish, believing in one God, the Creator, who had rescued them from Pharaoh and guided them to the Promised Land.

Gradually they came to see that God is more complex – he is one God, but there is Father God; his Son Jesus is God and they already believed in the Holy Spirit who is God – three persons in One.

The Holy Spirit

It is not difficult to imagine God the Father and it is even easier to picture God the Son. But the Holy Spirit sounds much more vague, until we consider what he actually does for us.

1. He was present in creation – ‘the Spirit of God hovered over the waters’ and influences every person who has ever been born. Anything good in human nature comes from him – kindness, mercy, justice, etc. and all that is good in art, literature, music and crafts. All human creativity derives from God the Spirit.
2. He also gives every person an opportunity to know something about God – wherever human beings are to be found, there is evidence of worship.
3. The Holy Spirit encourages us to respond positively to the Gospel. We think we are turning to God, which is true, but we are being helped by the Spirit of God. Once we have become Christians the Holy Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Jesus.

We call this **the fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.**

Consider that list for a moment and identify your strengths and weaknesses – then ask the Holy Spirit to help you with the weak areas in your life.

Finally the Holy Spirit comes to give us power to live for God and to serve him. The disciples used to be cowards before the Holy Spirit filled them with his power on the Day of Pentecost (Whitsunday).

Why not ask for prayer now for more of the Holy Spirit in your life – this is a simple request, there is nothing to fear, but if heartfelt can change you into a person who can be used by God in his service.

Session 5

THE CHURCH: WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

Most people think of a church building when they hear the word ‘Church’. But church really means Christians gathering together for worship and to relate to one another (fellowship). In the early years after Jesus founded the Christian Church, these meetings were fairly simple and unstructured.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2: 42-47).

The reference to the Temple Courts refers to the Jewish temple, which had large areas where people could gather informally at any time. So the first believers met there as a convenient central point, but also in homes. Today we still meet in church buildings or halls or more informally in homes.

The new Christians had just been filled with the Holy Spirit and were excited about the resurrection and their faith in Jesus.

So what did they do (which Christians still do today)?

Christian teaching

- They were eager to learn more about the Christian faith - they would share stories about what Jesus had taught and done; they would explain the meaning of his teaching, his death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- They only had the Old Testament in those days and they would look back at that and discover how it related to their new faith and how it was prophesied that Jesus would come into the world. It is very important for all believers to learn more about Christianity – which can take a life-time!

Fellowship

- It was so important for the believers to meet up together, to encourage one another – remember that this was a time when Christians were in danger from the authorities. Many Christians today live in countries where there is danger and persecution. But even Christians in the West are marginalised and we need each other to strengthen our faith.

Breaking bread

- This refers to taking Communion. Jesus instituted Holy Communion at the Last Supper before his death.

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26).

Jesus knew that many people could not read or write but also that a simple ceremony would help all Christians down through the ages to remember his death and its meaning. This was to establish a covenant between God and his children, to give believers eternal life as they repent of their sins and put their trust in his Son. Holy Communion is to be observed until the Second Coming of Jesus.

Prayer and praise

- Individual prayer is important but also praying together. This may be done in formal prayers in church or in an informal way in a group. There is power in praying together and it is special when we can give thanks for answered prayer. Praising God in prayer and singing is also uplifting for Christians. Sometimes this can be structured, such as hymn singing led by an organ and a trained choir, but it can also be much more informal, led by a worship group, or even just spontaneous singing of favourite hymns and songs in a group situation.

Sharing

- The early Christians shared their money and possessions. Some Christians still do that, but most give a proportion of their money to help with causes such as famine relief, or to help a needy individual or to enable the ministry of the church to continue.

Evangelism (spreading the Gospel) and Baptism

- Many people became new believers through the witness of the early church, until Christianity spread through the known world. Still today most churches are involved in reaching out in various ways to those who are not yet believers. New believers, if they have not already been baptised as children, can be baptised as adults, which is a sign of dedicating their life to God.

DISCUSS how your local church reaches out in evangelism to win new believers and how you might share your faith with others

THE BIBLE AND PRAYER

What is the Bible?

It is a library of 66 books written over a period of 1600 years (60 generations) by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen and scholars. It was written in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects and yet has a harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history. Since the advent of printing it has been the world's best-seller.

It is divided into various sections:

The Old Testament

The first 5 books deal with history and law. They cover creation, the deliverance of the people of God from slavery in Egypt and the giving of the Ten Commandments together with other laws and regulations for daily life. They are referred to as the Pentateuch.

The next twelve are mainly an historical account of the Israelites up to 400 B.C.

Then there is *a section of five books covering poetry and wisdom* including Psalms and Proverbs.

The final seventeen books of the Old Testament (O. T.) are the books of the Prophets They cover the same time span as the later historical books but from the prophetic view point.

The New Testament

The New Testament (N. T.) covers the period from the birth of Christ until approximately 90 A.D.

The first 4 books known as the Gospels give an account of Jesus' life and ministry including his resurrection and ascension.

The next, *Acts, is an account of how the early church* was born and started to grow.

The *next 20 books are letters* or "epistles" written by various authors (mainly Paul) containing doctrine, advice and encouragement for the growing church.

Finally *Revelation is an "apocalyptic" book*, expressing its meaning through symbols and imagery. It contains a message for the churches of the time, a vision of the battle between God and evil especially in the Last Days and a description of Christ's second coming, judgment, heaven and hell.

The Bible has survived vicious attacks with many attempts to ban it, from the early Roman Emperors to modern Communists. Many scholars have attacked it over the centuries but still the Bible is triumphant and the world's best seller.

<h1>The Old Testament</h1>		History & Law	THE PENTATEUCH	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
		History	HISTORY	Joshua Judges Ruth 1&2 Samuel 1&2 Kings
<h1>The New Testament</h1>		Drama Poetry Proverbs	POETRY AND WISDOM	Job Psalms Proverbs
		Prophecy Poetry History	THE PROPHETS	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah
<h1>The New Testament</h1>		Biography History	THE GOSPELS	Matthew Mark Luke John
		Letters	THE EPISTLES	Acts Romans 1&2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1&2 Thessalonians
<h1>The New Testament</h1>		Letters Prophecy	REVELATION	1&2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James 1&2 Peter 1,2&3 John Jude
				Revelation

Is the Bible reliable?

There are 13,000 ancient manuscripts (written copies) of portions of the New Testament written shortly after the time of the original copies. This compares with a maximum of 200 manuscripts for many other ancient books - and most have less than 20 surviving copies. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah copied in 125 BC, but written between 700-680 BC and discovered recently, proved that part of the Old Testament in modern versions is very accurate. Archaeologists have also spoken of the almost incredible confirmation of the Bible by archaeology.

What does the Bible say about itself?

2 Timothy 3:14-16 says that *"all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"* 2 Peter 1:20-21 says *"no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."* Peter also calls Paul's writing "Scripture" and puts them on a level with the rest of Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16).

The Bible therefore is inspired (i.e. God-breathed). But the writers weren't "human typewriters." God didn't "switch off" their personalities. "Inspiration" means such a union of divine and human elements that the result is guaranteed to us as the Word of God for the life of man.

Are Bible prophecies fulfilled?

A good example of prophecies being fulfilled is that there are over 300 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament (i.e. prophecies fulfilled in the life of Jesus). The very latest date for any of them would be before 250 B.C. So the Old Testament predicted Jesus' virgin birth (Isa. 7: 14) at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and that he would be

Emmanuel ("God with us" - Isaiah 7:14). His suffering was foretold in detail in Isaiah 53 e.g. dying with criminals (v. 12). His hands and feet would be pierced (Psa 22: 16) and his garments parted and lots cast (Psa 22:18). Using scientific methods, a scholar has calculated that the probability of anyone fulfilling eight of the main prophecies is one chance in 1,000,000, million, million!

Reading the Bible

It is helpful to start reading a short portion of the Bible each day and to pray. Try to set aside 15-30 minutes daily for this and try to find a quiet place. What is the best time for you - early morning, mid-morning, during lunch break, or what? Why not plan it now? Aim to buy a Reference Bible (we recommend the NIV Study Bible). You may also buy commentaries e.g. "Tyndale" on the different books of the Bible, or use daily notes obtainable from the address below. But seek to have your own thoughts on the Bible as well.

The Good Book Company, Blenheim House, 1 Blenheim Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 9AP
www.thegoodbook.co.uk/daily-bible-reading/

Bible Reading Fellowship, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 3FE

[Bible reading notes: At a glance – BRFOonline](#)

Scripture Union, Trinity House, Opal Court, Opal Drive, Fox Milne, Milton Keynes MK15 0DF
content.scriptureunion.org.uk/bible-reading-guides

Prayer

Prayer is **NOT** a spiritual shopping list - a list of wants! The next four headings form the acrostic (in English) "ACTS" giving four main aspects of prayer.

Adoration

Prayer is a dialogue between persons who love one another. God desires our worship. John 4:23: “true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.” Adoration is telling God how great he is, and how much we love him. Take time to “tune in” spiritually to God's presence. Reading the Bible can help here.

Psalms 103:1 *“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.”*

Psalms 18:1 *“I love you, O Lord, my strength.”*

Psalms 34:3 *“Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.”*

We might well praise God for his willingness to answer prayer (Luke 11:11-13), and his ability to answer prayer (Jer. 32:17, 27).

N.B. The importance of silent (non-verbal) adoration, Psalms 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Confession

We need to take our sin seriously, as God does, and confess to him, because it was the reason for the death of Jesus. Unconfessed sin can be one of the main barriers to prayers being answered. Psalms 66: 18: “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Isa. 59:2: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

All unconfessed sin is a barrier to prayer. The Bible specifically mentions some sins:

1. Being unforgiving (Matt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:25).
2. Not apologizing or being reconciled (Matt. 5:23-24).
3. Selfish motives (James 4:3).
4. Marital problems (1 Pet. 3:7).
5. Doubts and unbelief (Matt. 21:22; James 1:5-8; 42).
6. Rebellion (1 Sam 15:22-23).
7. Ingratitude to God (Rom. 1:21).
8. Treating people or things as more important than God (idolatry) (Ezek. 143).
9. Pride (Job 35:12-13).

But don't be too inward-looking. Don't “rake up the muck.” Let God convict you of sin and then ask him to forgive you and cleanse you through the blood of Jesus.

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7-10). So God truly forgives us because of the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus.

If you cannot get free from feelings of guilt after this, you may need to share the problem in strict confidence with a discreet Christian leader.

Thanksgiving

Don't forget to be thankful to God as nine out of ten lepers healed by Jesus did (Luke 17:11-19). Rather give thanks to God continually: *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name”* (Heb. 13:15).

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5: 18).

Give thanks for everything: *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph. 5:18-20).

Even in difficulties and suffering, God expects and deserves our thanks: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything”* (James 1:24).

Supplication (or Intercession)

Supplication is an earnest, heartfelt prayer for other people and situations: *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should”* (Eph. 6: 18-20).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:1-4).

But prayer is a two-way Conversation

How does God speak to us?

- a. Still small voice. Habakkuk 2:20: *“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”* And we need to learn to be silent before God. God spoke to Elijah not in the great wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in a *“gentle whisper”* (1 Kings 19:12). We need to hear the *“gentle whisper”* of the Lord. Often even in prayer, we are not still for long enough to do so. Spend at least a few minutes each day, or at the beginning of a prayer group, listening to God, after having given your own thoughts to him to cleanse, and asked for his protection from wrong thoughts.

Jesus said *“My sheep listen to my voice.”* (John 10:27). God's voice has been described as follows: *“It is rather like the voice of conscience, only richer and more positive. Conscience approves and disapproves, but God's voice informs and instructs. It never argues, but is quietly insistent and authoritative. The more you give God a listening ear, the more quickly you will develop recognition of your Master's voice.”*

- b. The words of a Bible verse or passage which suddenly comes to mind;
- c. A recurring thought, e.g. the name of a person in need, or a situation impressed on the mind;
- d. A mental picture, not thought up but ‘given.’
- e. A ‘word’ of prophecy, wisdom or knowledge, a spoken gift of the Spirit of some kind from God.

What could be more important than a conversation with father God?!