

**Session 4: Being witnesses to Jesus Christ – Leaders Notes**

Diocesan Vision Course	Youth Companion
<p><b>Resources:</b>                      Course Members materials, pens, vision course DVD, DVD player, TV. It would also be helpful to have a copy of the practical actions that the group suggested in session 2 of the vision course.</p>	<p><b>Extra Resources (in addition to those on the left):</b>                      Newspapers, Scissors, Small pieces of paper, Pens/Pencils, A Cross</p>
<p><b>Session Outline:</b>                      Welcome                      Opening Worship and Prayer including Vision Prayer                      Getting Started                      Bible Passage                      DVD Teaching Input                      Stepping Stones                      My Story                      Our Priorities                      Prayer Reflection                      Take it Away Material</p>	<p><b>Session Aims:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide young people with the opportunity to reflect upon how they became a Christian</li> <li>• To encourage young people to be witnesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Welcome: (2 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Welcome back those who came last week and any new members to the group, and briefly recap last week's session.</p>	<p><b>Icebreaker Game: (10minutes)</b></p> <p>Play a quick game of charades. Taking it in turns different members of the group act out a good moment from the past week and the rest of the group have to try and guess what they're doing (e.g. eating a good meal, bike ride, completing an XBOX game)</p>
<p><b>Vision Prayer: (2 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Begin the course in prayer and join together in praying the Diocesan Vision Prayer.                      Heavenly Father,                      we embrace Your call for us to make disciples,                      to be witnesses and to grow leaders.                      Give us the eyes to see Your vision,                      ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit                      and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son,                      our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.</p>	<p><b>As a youth group you may wish to start with the prayer on the left or say it together at the end of your session.</b></p>

<p><b>Getting Started: (5 minutes)</b></p>  <p>In pairs discuss the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What ‘good news’ have you been told recently?</li> <li>• Which people helped us to discover the ‘Good News’ about Jesus?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Getting Started Activity: (10mins)</b></p> <p>Give out a few newspapers (try to have a mixture of local and national). Ask the group to go through the papers and cut out good news stories then go around the group and share a few of the headlines.</p> <p>Discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What ‘good news’ have you been told recently?</li> <li>• Who in our lives has shared with us the ‘Good News’ about Jesus? Did they share the Good News in one go like a headline or was it more of a process over time like an ongoing story?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bible Passage: Colossians 4:2-6 (11 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Invite someone in the group to read the following passage and then explore the Bible passage using either Option 1 or Option 2 below.</p> <p><i><sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.</i></p> <p>Option 1          From the Bible passage underline the things that Paul lists which will help people hear the Good News about Jesus. Which of these things do you feel confident doing? Which things seem harder? Discuss this in groups of four.</p> <p>Option 2          Paul was the great missionary of the first century and longed for others to share his passion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why was prayer so vital for Paul's witness to Jesus Christ?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Alternative Bible passage Questions: (10mins)</b></p> <p>Explain that you’re going to read a passage from the Bible that was written as a letter by a man called Paul. He was writing to encourage a church. After reading the passage on the left discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever prayed, or heard others pray, that God would help you to tell others about Jesus?</li> <li>• What does Paul say is important? (in your discussion try to highlight prayer and action as well as speaking)</li> <li>• Have you ever had an opportunity to share your faith? What did it feel like? What happened? (obviously don’t force people to share experiences unless they are willing to discuss them. As leaders try to share a couple of your experiences if the group don’t want to)</li> </ul>

<p>2. In his instructions, underline the word(s) which seem particularly relevant to you for your witness to the message of the Gospel and discuss with others your choices.</p> <p>3. How can we prepare to make the most, and more, of 'every opportunity'?</p>	
<p><b>DVD Teaching Input: (5 Minutes)</b></p>  <p>Play session 4 Being Witnesses from the DVD</p>	<p><b>Watch the DVD in advance to see if you think your group will engage with it. If you don't think they will then skip this activity.</b></p>
<p><b>Stepping Stones: (20 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Imagine our journey of faith as being a series of stepping stones across a river. The role of the local church is to make sure that 'stepping stones' are in place to help people move forward in their faith journey.</p> <p>You could label the picture in Appendix 1 with the stepping stones that are currently part of your church. Some ideas are listed in Appendix 2. Are any of the 'stepping stones' missing or a bit wobbly? What should be done to sort out the 'wobbly' stones or fill the gaps?</p>	<p><b>Stepping Stones: (15mins)</b></p> <p>Give each young person a copy of the stepping stones picture in Appendix 1. Ask them to label the stepping stones with things that they think have helped them to grow in faith (e.g. being told about faith by a friend, joining a youth group, going to an event/camp). Some of the group may still think that they have a foot on the bank and are not really sure if they have a faith, others might think that they have a really strong faith and have crossed the river, reassure them that this isn't any kind of test.</p> <p>Ask them to think about where some of their friends might be, have they taken the first step towards being a Christian by asking about church and faith or do they think they're not at all interested in crossing the river? Ask the group to see if they can think of stepping stones that would help their friends to grow in faith. What attitudes, actions or activities might demonstrate God's love to those they know?</p>
<p><b>My Story: (12 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Share in pairs the story of how you came to be a disciple of Jesus (you have 3 minutes each). The story might include something about your background, how Jesus came to be a part of your life and what following Jesus means to you now. Then share as a whole group your experience of doing this exercise.</p>	<p><b>Alternative My Story Activity: (10mins)</b></p> <p>Give each young person a piece of A4 paper. Using the paper in a portrait orientation ask them to write something at the top which helped them to find out about Jesus or to grow in faith (e.g. a relative told them that they were praying for them or someone stuck up for them when they were being bullied). Then ask them to fold the top bit of paper over and write something else (make sure they write on the same side of the paper as the first thing they wrote). Repeat this six or seven</p>

	<p>times then ask them to unfold their papers and share what it says with the group.</p> <p>Point out that often (but not always) faith develops over time and we discover God’s love for us through various people’s words and actions. Some group members may have the same person written more than once on their paper - often people come to faith through an ongoing friendship with another Christian.</p>
<p><b><i>Our Priorities: (12 minutes)</i></b></p>  <p>As a group come up with some suggestions that would help the church and all of its members be a witness to Jesus. Some things you might want to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pray regularly for three people (or more) who are not yet committed Christians.</li> <li>• Be a witness to Jesus by serving others through actions – you might like to revisit the exercise you did in Session 2 of this course looking at practical ways of bringing transformation to your community.</li> <li>• Develop a ‘Culture of invitation’ by encouraging one another to take the initiative in inviting people to events, services or to come on an Enquirers’ course. One simple way of inviting others is... ‘I’m going, it’s going to be good; would you like to come?’</li> </ul> <p>As a leader of the group, make sure these are fed back to the church leadership, PCC and parish priest.</p>	<p><b><i>Our Priorities: (10 minutes)</i></b></p> <p>Looking back at their stepping stones and thinking about the testimonies that they’ve shared, encourage the group to think about ways that they could be a witness to Jesus in words and actions.</p> <p>Discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you think of a simple action you could do this week to live out God’s love for someone you know?</li> <li>• What kind of event/activity could the church/group run that you might be able to someone to?</li> <li>• What might help you to invite them? What might put you off?</li> <li>• What kind of event/activity could the church/group do that would share God’s love with people in the community?</li> <li>• Thinking back to the Bible passage, how could we act towards outsiders (people we don’t know or people who aren’t yet part of the church community) so that they might begin to understand that God loves them?</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Prayer Reflection: (3 minutes)</i></b></p>  <p>The following reflection based on the earlier Bible passage can be read by two people in the group. One person reads the text in <b>bold type</b> and another responds with the text in <i>italics</i></p>	<p><b><i>Prayer Activity: (5minutes)</i></b></p> <p>Give everyone a small piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask them to write down the name of a friend or family member who isn’t a Christian and who they would like to know Jesus. Ask them to fold the piece of paper in half (explain that no-one will look at the names, their prayer is between them and God) and place it at the foot of the cross.</p>

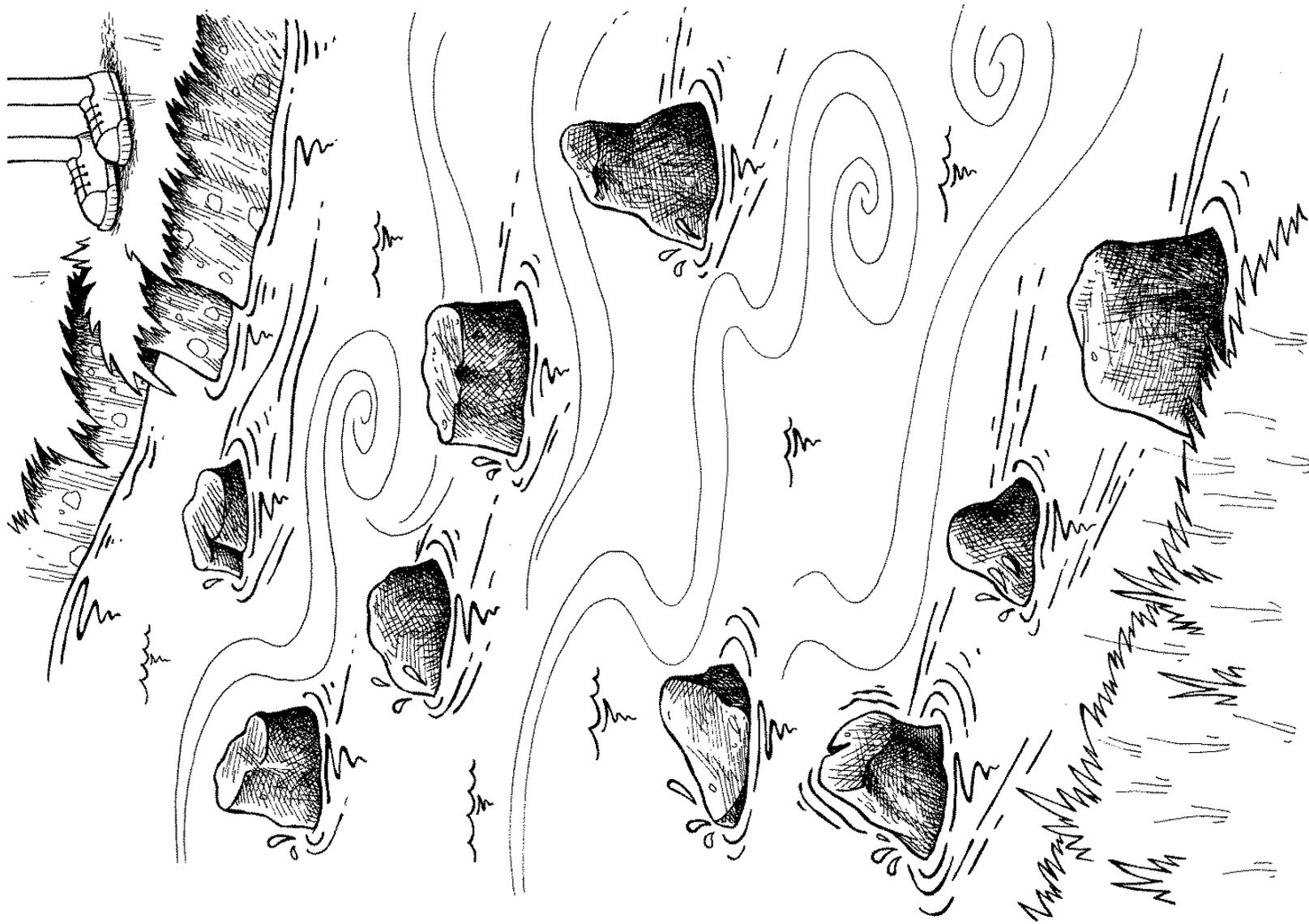
<p><b>Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.</b>  <i>Lord, sometimes I'm not very good at praying. I'm too busy, distracted or occupied with other things. To be honest Lord sometimes I get scared about talking about you to other people. At times I feel chained up by fear and anxiety. (pause)</i></p> <p><b>Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.</b>  <i>Lord, there are times when I don't think I'm a very good witness. I'm not sure about being bold, there are times when I feel timid and would much rather keep quiet. Jesus, I'm grateful for those who cared enough about me to tell me about Jesus. I thank you for their example and for their words. (pause)</i></p> <p><b>Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.</b>  <i>Lord, help me to be a good witness in what I do and in what I say. Help me to share my faith in a way that is relaxed, natural and helpful. Lord help me to know what to say and how to say it. I'm nervous about being a witness for you, please give me courage and help me to point other people to you. Amen</i></p>	<p>When everyone has placed their piece of paper at the foot of the cross say the following (or similar prayer).  <i>Lord God we thank you that you know us and love us. We thank you that you know and love the people we have named, even if they don't know you. Help us to share our faith in our attitude, our actions and our words. Help these people to come to know the hope, love, forgiveness and joy that can be found in you. Amen.</i></p> <p>You may wish to play music whilst you do this activity or you may wish just to do it quietly.</p>
<p><b>Take it Away Material: (3 minutes)</b></p>  <p>Introduce the take away material and encourage people to continue to reflect on the theme of being witnesses to Jesus through the week.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.  <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward</p>	<p><b>Take it Away Material: (3 minutes)</b></p> <p>Challenge everyone to pray once a day for the person who they named and placed at the foot of the cross. They may wish to identify a time of day to pray for them so that they don't forget.</p>

*outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:2-6*

You might like to print out this text and pin it up in the bathroom. Every time you turn on a tap you could:

- Pray for three people (or more) who are not yet committed Christians.
- Think about ways you could be a witness to Jesus by your actions.
- Pray for opportunities to be a witness to Jesus through your words.

Appendix 1



## Appendix 2

- What stepping stones might help encourage people to move from exploring faith to becoming a committed disciple of Jesus who is serving God and bringing the Good News of Jesus to others?
- Often the first steps that people make in their faith journey are coming into contact with Christians at a social event. Does your church have social activities that would match the interests of the local community?
- They may then respond to an invitation to attend an event at which an aspect of the Christian faith is communicated in a positive and appropriate way (e.g. men's breakfast, ladies craft evening, Pub Quiz night, other outreach events or possibly an invitation to a service). Does your church organise these types of events?
- Some 'Stepping Stones' that churches have found helpful include: running Enquirers' courses (Alpha, Start! Christianity Explored etc.), inviting people to Confirmation/membership courses, encouraging involvement in Church based activities or taking opportunities to serve others in the local community. Do these 'Stepping Stones' exist in your church? Are there other 'Stepping Stones' that might help people move forward as followers of Jesus?
- Consider what preparation you offer to people bringing children to a Christening. How can you help people understand the promises that they make in a baptism service? How will you continue to stay in contact with baptism families?
- Would planting a new congregation, such as messy church or a service for a particular group of people or starting a fresh expression of church, help to bridge the gap between people in your area and the life of church?
- Just as with real stepping stones, if the gaps are too big or if any stepping stones are missing then people get stuck, give up and go back, or fall in! It is hard to go from mild curiosity about God to regular attendance at a church service; we need to make sure there are some stepping stones in between these two points. What happens in your church when someone 'falls off' or stops on their journey?

Once you've had the chance to jot down some ideas, discuss your thoughts in groups of four or five people.