



Date: Sunday 18th May to Sunday 15th June 2025

Key point of this campaign: “The Holy Spirit gives us the GRACE and the POWER to share the good news of Jesus with the world around us.”

Hi CG Leaders,

We want to let you know...

- Our annual Vision Builders Dinner is happening on Friday 20th June at 7pm at the ICC Grand Ballroom, Darling Harbour. You can find more details and the registration in our announcement sections below.
- Please remember to report attendance and write in the *Go Textbox* any outreach to others your group members are experiencing. You can also use this text box for name changes, updates to your cg, to let us know to add people etc.
- Here is a link to a wonderful CG Course titled [Go Training](#). It has been designed for Connect Groups by Nicola Gibb – the Pastor of C3 Penrith. We know this course will equip and empower you in reaching those needing Jesus.

Below are some questions for you to use with your connect group over this campaign. Please choose the questions you feel most applicable or best fit for your cg. Thank you and have a fabulous discussion and time together.

With love,

The Connect Team.

Announcements:

<p>Online Prayer</p>	<p><i>If someone in your connect group can't make it to a face-to-face prayer meeting, our Online Prayer Meeting is a great alternative! It is open to everyone across all locations. Runs every Tuesday night from 6:30–7:10pm and is a fresh, anointed, and engaging 40-minute prayer meeting, centrally led.</i></p> <p><i>This isn't just watching someone pray, it's a powerful time where we all pray together. People are walking, praying, speaking in tongues, and leaning in together online.</i></p> <p><i>Here's the link to join or share: https://c3syd.church/prayer/</i></p>
<p>Foundations</p>	<p><i>Our online Foundations Course is held in the evenings and runs weekly for 5 weeks. Please encourage any new believers in your connect group to attend this significant course to help them establish strong foundations, even if the course runs on your connect group night.</i></p> <p><i>Please stay in touch with them to help them plug into community, gather them to church, answer any questions they may have and then resume attending your cg once the course finishes. (Of course, if your cg meeting doesn't clash with the Foundations course, and the new believer is up for it, they could attend both meetings – Foundations and your Connect Group.)</i></p> <p><i>The Sunday following the last week of the Foundations Course will be a Holy Spirit Baptism Sunday at all Locations.</i></p> <p><i>Here's a link to the website for more information: https://c3syd.church/next-step-foundations/</i></p>
<p>Vision Builders</p>	<p><i>This is a special night where we gather as one church family to celebrate all that God is doing and give toward the vision we're building together.</i></p> <p><i>Please encourage everyone in your connect group to plan ahead and be there. It's also a great opportunity to make it a shared night out, plan carpools and come expectant for what God will do.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage your group to register via the text message they've received. If anyone hasn't received the text, please direct them to the website to register: https://c3syd.church/visionbuilders/</i></p>

Connect Questions

- *Week 1: Go Into All the World: Don't leave it to the one*
- *Week 2: Holy Spirit Led Adventures: Philip in Samaria*

Date: Sunday 25th May 2025

The Holy Spirit gives us the GRACE and the POWER to share the good news of Jesus with the world around us. God can use us in our current situations to impact those around us.

Evangelism is all about sharing our story and the good news of the gospel to others. It's a Spirit-empowered adventure!

Phillip the Evangelist is one of the early, unsung heroes of the New Testament church – faithful, Spirit-led and willing to go wherever God sent him. As we heard on Sunday, he served practically, helping to meet the needs of some widows not getting their share of daily food. He also ministered boldly, seeing people healed, demons cast out and a whole city filled with joy. He was willing to step in and serve behind the scenes and didn't wait for a position or title to serve the Lord.

1. What perception do you see prevail in 'the church' overall regarding evangelism and ministry? Whose role is this perceived to be?
2. What does the example of Phillip say to us? (e.g. we don't need a title; the Holy Spirit will guide us; evangelism is really a Spirit-empowered adventure; any other thoughts.)
3. Who empowers us and equips us to serve the Lord in our current situation? Discuss the importance of having the Holy Spirit in our lives.
4. We need more Philips—people who carry both humility and boldness, who respond to God's nudge, and who keep saying yes to Jesus in every season. Have you any stories to share of feeling God's nudge? What happened?
5. Where might God be asking you to say yes right now, to play a role as part of the Church, even if it feels small or unnoticed?
6. In Acts 8:26-39 we see the Holy Spirit prompt Philip. Together as a cg read about this moment where he meets the Ethiopian official. Have people share what speaks to people the most in these verses and discuss.

7. What situations or people are currently in front of you? Are there places in your life where you are the only Christian? How can we prioritise spending time with people to talk and listen rather than rushing from one thing to another?
8. There is an adventure ahead. Are you giving the Holy Spirit space to lead your everyday decisions? Do you have any practical tips you can share with each other about doing this?
9. Jesus came to preach to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Do you feel equipped to do this too? If not, how can your Connect group help you to learn or simply pray for you to be empowered by the Holy Spirit?
10. Sharing the story of Jesus to fellow Jews in the 1st Century would've been based upon the expectation that the Messiah was coming (they were all familiar with this concept). What do you think are important background pieces or principles when explaining the Jesus story to people today?

○ ***Week 3: Encouragement releases destiny: Barnabas***

○ ***Week 4: Beyond your own fears: Timothy***

Date: Sunday 8th June 2025 (Day of Pentecost)

Timothy is a great example of someone who grew into leadership through faithfulness, humility, and discipleship. His relationship with Paul was shaped by love, mentorship, and shared mission, stepping into responsibility at a young age, and learning to lead with courage.

Timothy demonstrates to us that God can use us despite our weaknesses and fears because He is the one who is strong and leads us in His way.

1. Timothy was young and had to overcome internal doubts. You don't have to feel ready to be used by God. Often, God calls us forward and lets our confidence and ability grow as we walk and trust Him. Are you holding back because you feel unqualified? Or are you trusting God to grow you as you go?
2. Discipleship happens in a relationship – not just downward information. Timothy had his mother and grandmother, as well as of course the Apostle Paul shaping him and encouraging him. Timothy let others shape him. Who are the people helping to shape your walk with Jesus? Or how are you shaping those around you? Discuss.
3. Do you have people who are further along the journey of walking with Jesus to ask questions to? Do you have people who are newer to the faith that you can

encourage? What steps could you take if you don't? Who are some trustworthy voices that can help you grow in books and videos?

4. Paul encouraged Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God. Are there any gifts you feel you have neglected but could grow in as you intentionally use them?
5. In a world of noise and pressure, how do we stay anchored in the Truth? Discuss ways you and your cg members stay grounded in Scripture.
6. What benefits are there as we stay grounded in Scripture? (e.g. it builds our faith; brings clarity of mind; creates confidence in our walk, etc.)
7. Paul reminds Timothy to guard his heart, hold onto sound teaching, lead with integrity, and fan into flame the gift of God in him (2 Timothy 1:6–7). Share practical ways you have heard, or picked up along the way, to do these things that can help members of your Connect Group.
8. A key part of Timothy's story was that he didn't let his age or personality hold him back. Do you feel that your age or personality holds you back? Does it encourage you to see God using shy Timothy, grouchy Jonah or impetuous Simon-Peter in His plans? Discuss.
9. Are you consistently feeding your faith and keeping your heart stirred for what God has called you to? How?
10. What is your next step to fan the flame of faith?

○ ***Week 5: Gifted to Give: Lydia***

Week 1: Don't leave it to the one.

Supporting content:

There are so many people who spread the good news of Jesus in the book of Acts, that we don't have names for. If you read the book of Acts, you can feel overwhelmed that it seems like it is all about Paul! You would not be wrong by saying, well I'm not a Lead Pastor so I don't have a role in the Kingdom. But just like Jesus didn't do it on his own, Paul is not doing this on his own. We all have a story to tell, we all have our own style of evangelism, we all have a part to play.

In this campaign we are going to focus on the "others" in the book of Acts, Philip, Barnabas, Timothy and Lydia. That took the gift of the Holy Spirit empowerment and did their part in the spread of the gospel. Each part was different, each part was unique, each part was important!

The Spirit Empowered Church

When we look at Luke- Acts in full, we see that *it is the story of the disciples receiving what Jesus received in order to do what Jesus did.* So, let's first see what happened with Jesus.

Jesus Empowered in the Spirit

Luke 3:21

²¹"When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."²³ Now Jesus Himself began His ministry..."

Luke 4:14

¹⁴"Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit..."

Luke emphasises the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus ministry more than the other 3 gospel writers.

The mission statement of Luke-Acts is found in Luke 4:18 – Jesus declares his mission; it is his inaugural speech to launch his ministry.

Luke 4:18 – *which becomes our mission statement as individuals.*

¹⁸"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
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's
favour."

Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 Jesus declares the mission statement for Luke-Acts. To preach to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Now as we read Luke-Acts we discover – the poor does not mean economically poor – it is the poor that are marginalized from society. The ultimate poor are the economically rich like Zacchaeus (Luke 19) – Jesus restores the poor to the people of God. Jesus' ministry was to Gentiles to restore them to the people of God.

Luke-Acts is the outworking of the mission of Jesus to bring in the Gentiles. Jesus did the work and taught the disciples beginning the work in Luke. The disciples then continued to do and say everything that Jesus did and said in Luke. From the Jesus to the Gentiles.

Luke-Acts is a continuous movement from Jesus – the disciples – the seventy-two – one hundred and twenty – the Church – the nations!

What Jesus did in the Spirit (Luke 3:21 and Luke 4:14)

- the 12 did in the Spirit (Luke 9:1) establishing a new leadership/new tribes
- the 72 did in the Spirit (Luke 10:1-3) (72 from Numbers 11:24-27) the number of the nations
- the 120 did in the Spirit (Acts 2:1) establishing the new Church
- the 3000 did in the Spirit (Acts 2:42) all people
(note the redemptive plan of Exodus 32:38, 3000 destroyed)

Pentecost began the spread of the gospel to the nations

When the 3000 were saved they didn't all stay in Jerusalem, they were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit and then they went home (remember they were only there for Pentecost Festival) and continued to preach the gospel and started house churches back in their hometown.

Acts 2:5-11

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

- Church in Rome – Roman's letter
- Church in Crete (where Titus ministered)
- Church in Ephesus (Asia) (where Timothy ministered)

Parthians, Medes, Elamites... all from the list below went home from Jerusalem empowered to preach the gospel of Jesus to their neighbours.

Now we do in the Spirit.

Now it is our turn, now we do in the Spirit to continue the Spirit empowered mission to the nations! (Acts 2:17-21). To be a witness for Christ is not something you have been asked to do in your own strength. But God has graciously given us a 'helper' (John 14:16) to assist us in all that God has called us to do.

Acts 2:17-21

¹⁷“In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.”^[a]

Acts does not have a finish – in Greek it is an incomplete sentence – it is a hanging sentence; Acts is a dramatic in conclusion. It is essentially meant – YOU FINISH THE STORY! We are Acts 29...

Acts 28:31

³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

From the beginning declaration found in Mark to the spread of the gospel to Jerusalem (Acts 1-8), Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth in Acts 28 (Rome), we are called to join the story and preach the gospel.

Mark 16:15 Go into all the world (ESV)

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

We all are called to share the good news!

The Church was never meant to hold onto the Gospel message for ourselves, but we have been empowered to be “witnesses” (Acts 1:8) of Jesus Christ and have been given the Spirit to empower us as we do so. The purpose of this gathering is to scatter so that the lives of believers are living as salt and light in their community (Matthew 5:13-16).

This is where we turn to in the following weeks to look at the stories of ordinary individuals (such as Philip, Barnabas, Timothy and Lydia) who lived out their life and calling to be the Church.

Week 2: Holy Spirit Led Adventures: Philip in Samaria

Date: Sunday 25th May 2025

Key point of this week: To understand that God can use you in your current situation to impact those around you. God has a got a plan and we need to live in obedience and in step with the Holy Spirit.

Key scriptures: Acts 8:4-40, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 21:7-9

Historical context, commentary + supporting references:

- Blue Letter Bible – Philip the Evangelist: https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/maclaren_alexander/expositions-of-holy-scripture/acts/philip-the-evangelist-again.cfm
- Got Question – Who Was Philip in the Bible: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Philip-in-the-Bible.html>

Evangelism is all about sharing your story and the good news of the gospel to others. It really is a spirit empowered adventure. Let's look at Philip and how he spread the good news of Jesus.

“One thing I have observed in all my years of ministry is that the most effective and important aspects of evangelism usually take place on an individual, personal level. Most people do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon they hear in a crowded setting. They come to Christ because of the influence of an individual.”

Character Study: Philip

Philip the Evangelist was one of the early, unsung heroes of the New Testament church—faithful, Spirit-led, and willing to go wherever God sent him. His story shows us what it looks like when someone says yes to God, whether it's serving practically or stepping into bold moments of ministry.

We first meet Philip in Acts 6:1–6. As the early church grew rapidly, tensions started to show. A practical need arose—some widows weren't getting their fair share of daily food. The apostles decided to appoint seven trustworthy leaders who were “of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:5) to oversee this. Philip was one of them. His willingness to step into a behind-the-scenes role shows something simple but powerful: he didn't need a platform to lead. He saw a need, carried it with character, and helped create unity in the church.

But Philip wasn't limited to just practical service. When persecution broke out in Jerusalem after Stephen's death (Acts 7:54–60), many believers scattered. Philip went to Samaria—a place many Jews would normally avoid—and preached the gospel (Acts 8:4–8). Miracles followed. People were healed, demons were cast out, and a whole city was filled with joy. Even Simon, a well-known sorcerer, came to faith (Acts 8:9–13). Philip wasn't one of the original apostles, but

that didn't stop him. He stepped out, trusted God, and people's lives were changed. His story reminds us: you don't need a title to carry the gospel with power.

One of Philip's most well-known moments came through a prompt from the Holy Spirit. He was told by an angel to go to a desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza (Acts 8:26–29), not knowing why. There he met an Ethiopian official—a man reading Isaiah, confused and searching for understanding. Philip didn't preach a sermon. He simply walked alongside him, answered his questions, and shared the story of Jesus starting from the Scripture the man was reading (Acts 8:30–35). The man believed and was baptised right there on the road (Acts 8:36–38). It's such a beautiful picture of personal evangelism—meeting someone in their moment, pointing them to Jesus, and letting the Spirit do the rest.

After this, Philip was suddenly taken to a new place—Azotus—and he kept preaching from town to town until he reached Caesarea (Acts 8:39–40), where he eventually settled. Years later, in Acts 21:8–9, Paul visits Philip's home in Caesarea and stays with him. By then, Philip is known as “the evangelist” and has four daughters who prophesy. It's a small detail, but it gives us a glimpse of a faithful man whose life still bore fruit years later—in his family and in his home.

Philip's story isn't about fame or the spotlight. It's about faithfulness. He was ready to serve tables and ready to share the gospel. He listened to the Holy Spirit and followed, whether it meant stepping into a city or walking a lonely road. He reminds us that evangelism isn't just big crusades—it's often a conversation, a step of obedience, or a willingness to go where others won't.

We need more Philips—people who carry both humility and boldness, who respond to God's nudge, and who keep saying yes to Jesus in every season. His life invites us to live open-handed, walk closely with the Spirit, and trust that even simple acts of obedience can lead to eternal impact.

Supporting points to key point:

1. You have a part to play.

- Philip wasn't one of the 12 disciples and wasn't even known for preaching the Gospel. But this didn't mean Philip wasn't of use or didn't even have an important role to play.
- Philip didn't wait for the spotlight—he simply served where he was needed (Acts 6:1–6), and God used that willingness to open doors for even greater influence.
- What's important is not the perceived “value” of a role, but simply participating as part of the Church.
- It is not the effect of 1 or 2 people who will change this city of Sydney, but when we all jump in, full of the Holy Spirit eager to play our part then we will see this city change.
- The Church, as the “Body of Christ”, has many parts that play various roles. See 1 Corinthians 12:12–14.

- There's no such thing as a wasted role when you're led by God. Whether you're setting up chairs, leading a Connect, or praying with one person, God sees it all and uses it to shape others and stretch your faith.

Application question: *Where might God be asking you to say yes right now, to play a role as part of the Church, even if it feels small or unnoticed?*

2. What is in front of you?

- We see in the story of Philip that his “calling” or “purpose” in life wasn't found in some other location or doing something different. Rather, everywhere Philip was he had a role to play.
- This started with Philip supporting the disciples and serving the growing Christian population.
- The persecution of Christians though saw Philip flee Jerusalem to go to Samaria.
- Here in these cities, Philip saw the Gospel impact many people. A couple of particularly powerful stories are:
 - Simon the Sorcerer
 - The Ethiopian Eunuch
- God was able to use Philip to share the Gospel with powerful individuals and impact whole communities as he simply followed the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Application question: *What situations or people are currently in front of you?*

3. There is an adventure ahead

- Philip did not have a 10-step plan for what he wanted to do with his life and followed this strictly, but God did have a plan in mind.
- As Philip followed God and the leading of the Holy Spirit, we see that Philip lived a full life. Seeing many individuals, and whole cities come to know Christ.
- Then 20 years later we see Philip still living in Caesarea, now with the title of “Evangelist” and 4 daughters who were known as prophets.
- Sometimes God leads us to places that feel inconvenient or unclear. The road to Gaza was a desert place. The instruction probably didn't make sense, but Philip obeyed anyway. Spirit-led living often requires trust before understanding.

Application question: *Are you giving the Holy Spirit space to lead your everyday decisions?*

Week 3: Encouragement releases destiny: Barnabas

Date: Sunday 1st June 2025

Key point of this week: We are called as the Church to act as a team. Supporting and encouraging one another as we move towards our common goal.

Key scriptures: Acts 13-14

Historical context, commentary + supporting references:

- Blue Letter Bible – Barnabas: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv-study-bible/new-testament/character-profiles/barnabas.cfm>
- Got Questions – Who Was Barnabas in the Bible: <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Barnabas.html>

Character Study: Barnabas

“Our witness – good or bad – is the overflow of our lives.” – Alistair Begg

Barnabas might not be as well-known as Paul or Peter, but his impact on the early church was profound. His name means “son of encouragement,” and he truly lived up to it. Through his generosity, belief in others, and ability to build bridges, Barnabas helped shape the early Christian movement in ways that still speak to us today.

We first meet Barnabas in Acts 4:36–37. His real name was Joseph, but the apostles gave him the nickname “Barnabas,” which means “son of encouragement.” He was a Levite from Cyprus and one of the early believers in Jerusalem. The first thing we learn about him is that he sold a field and gave the proceeds to the apostles. This act of generosity shows his heart—he was all in, willing to give up personal resources for the sake of the community.

Later, after Saul’s dramatic conversion, most Christians were understandably hesitant to trust him. Saul had persecuted the church fiercely. But Barnabas saw something in him. He brought Saul to the apostles and stood by his side, explaining how Saul had seen the Lord and preached boldly in Jesus’ name (Acts 9:26–27). Without Barnabas, Saul may never have been welcomed into the community of believers. Barnabas believed in people before others did—he made space for emerging leaders to grow.

Barnabas was also deeply involved in the growth of the Gentile church. When the church in Antioch began to expand, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to check it out. What did he do? He celebrated what God was doing, encouraged the believers, and then went to find Saul to bring him into the work (Acts 11:22–26). For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul taught together in Antioch. It was there that followers of Jesus were first called “Christians.”

In Acts 13:1–3, we see Barnabas and Saul (later called Paul) commissioned and sent out by the Holy Spirit on their first missionary journey. Barnabas wasn't just a supporter—he was a preacher, leader, and risk-taker. Along the way, they brought John Mark with them as an assistant. However, partway through the trip, John Mark left them and returned home (Acts 13:13).

This decision led to a sharp disagreement later between Paul and Barnabas. When planning a second journey, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance. Paul disagreed strongly, and they ended up going separate ways—Paul with Silas, and Barnabas with John Mark (Acts 15:36–40). Even in conflict, Barnabas stayed true to his nature—believing in people, seeing potential, and walking with those who needed a second chance. Interestingly, years later, Paul speaks warmly of John Mark, showing that Barnabas' belief in him bore fruit (2 Timothy 4:11).

Though we don't hear much about Barnabas after this point, his influence is woven through the early church. He helped launch Paul's ministry, supported the church in Antioch, and encouraged unity across diverse backgrounds. His life teaches us that leadership isn't always about being the loudest voice—sometimes it's about lifting others up, creating space, and trusting that God can do something great through someone else.

Barnabas reminds us that the church needs encouragers—people who believe in others, build bridges, and give generously. He was steady, Spirit-filled, and faithful, and his legacy lives on through the lives he touched.

Supporting points to key point:

1. Make Room for Others

- In the story of Barnabas, we see that He is able to make room for others. He gave people a chance and believed in them.
- Barnabas believed in people when others didn't—he brought Paul into the fold (Acts 9:26–27) and stood by John Mark when he failed (Acts 15:37–39).
- Barnabas stepped in when others were hesitant. Paul had a rough past, and most weren't ready to trust him. Barnabas saw what God was doing in Paul, not just where he had come from.
- Imagine what could have happened in the early church if Barnabas didn't support Paul (who was once Saul – one of the most severe persecutors of Christians) who ended up writing the majority of the New Testament and setting a foundation for the early church.

***Application question:** How can you lay aside your judgements of others and seek to see what God sees of each individual?*

2. It's Okay to Not Be the Hero

- Barnabas didn't push for recognition. He raised others up, even when it meant stepping back (Acts 13:1–3).
- Barnabas was okay with not being the hero, or seen as the best or most influential

- Barnabas brought Paul into leadership, and eventually Paul became the more prominent figure. He didn't try to hold on to power—he celebrated someone else rising.
- For those who are in a position of leadership – we need to remember that the Kingdom grows when we release others, not when we cling to control. It takes humility to step back, but legacy is built by what we release, not just what we do ourselves.

Application question: *Are you more focused on the church as a whole succeed, or being seen as the one who succeeds?*

3. Lift Others Up

- Being a part of the Church is a team sport. We need one another, and we need to encourage one another towards our common goal
- Just as the author of Hebrews says in chapter 10:
 - *“23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*
- The meaning of Barnabas' name is “son of encouragement” and he lived in a way where he encouraged those around him and spurred them on

Application question: *Who in your world needs someone to believe in them right now?*

Week 4: Beyond your fears: Timothy

Date: Sunday 8th June 2025 (Day of Pentecost)

Key point of this week: God can use you despite your own weaknesses and fears. He is the one who is strong and leads you in His way.

Historical context, commentary + supporting references:

- Blue Letter Bible – Timothy: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv-study-bible/new-testament/character-profiles/timothy.cfm>
- Got Questions – Who Was Timothy in the Bible: <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Timothy.html>

“Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell.” – C. T. Studd

Character Study: Timothy

Timothy is a great example of someone who grew into leadership through faithfulness, humility, and discipleship. He was faithful and loyal to another’s vision, in that faithfulness, he ended up running a church in Ephesus! His story is one of being mentored, stepping into responsibility at a young age, and learning to lead with courage. He didn’t start out as a bold apostle—he was a young man from a mixed background who was willing to grow, serve, and carry the message of Jesus wherever God called him.

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16:1–3, when Paul arrives in Lystra on one of his missionary journeys. Timothy was already well-spoken of by the local believers. His mother, Eunice, was a Jewish believer, and his father was a Greek. From the beginning, Timothy’s story includes both Jewish and Gentile heritage—something that positioned him uniquely for cross-cultural ministry. Paul saw potential in him and invited him to join the mission. Even at this early stage, Timothy was willing to make sacrifices; he was circumcised to avoid unnecessary barriers with the Jewish people they’d be ministering to.

From that point on, Timothy became one of Paul’s most trusted companions. He travelled with Paul to places like Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, often helping to strengthen the churches and deliver messages from Paul (Philippians 2:19–22, 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2). Paul called him his “beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:17) and later referred to him as “a true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). Their relationship was more than professional—it was deeply personal and spiritual, shaped by love, mentorship, and shared mission.

As Timothy grew, so did his responsibilities. Paul began sending him to churches to represent him, often in situations that were difficult or needed strong leadership. He was tasked with teaching, correcting errors, and encouraging believers to stay strong in the faith. Paul reminded the churches to treat Timothy with honour and not to look down on him because of

his youth (1 Timothy 4:12). That's a key part of Timothy's story—he didn't let his age or personality hold him back. Even when he may have felt timid or uncertain, he leaned into the calling God placed on his life.

Paul's letters to Timothy—1 Timothy and 2 Timothy—are full of encouragement, wisdom, and reminders to stay strong. In these letters, Paul speaks to Timothy like a spiritual father would to a son. He reminds him to guard his heart, hold onto sound teaching, lead with integrity, and fan into flame the gift of God in him (2 Timothy 1:6–7). Paul also reminds him of the spiritual legacy passed down through his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5), highlighting the power of family faith and spiritual heritage.

Even in hard times, Timothy stayed faithful. He stuck with Paul through trials and imprisonment. Paul trusted him so much that he left him to oversee the church in Ephesus, one of the most important churches in the early movement. There, Timothy was tasked with correcting false teaching and guiding the church forward with wisdom and clarity (1 Timothy 1:3–4).

Timothy's story is a reminder that you don't have to be loud or impressive to lead. What God is looking for is faithfulness, teachability, and a willingness to grow. Timothy didn't make his own way—he followed, served, and stayed close to wise leaders. And in time, he became one himself.

His life encourages anyone who's young in faith, stepping into leadership, or feeling unsure of their ability. If God could use Timothy, He can use you—especially when you're rooted in His Word, guided by mentors, and committed to the journey.

Supporting points to key point:

1. Don't Let Youth or Insecurity Hold You Back

- Timothy was young, but that didn't disqualify him. Paul encouraged him to lead confidently and set an example.
- Maturity is measured by your response to responsibility, not your age.
- Timothy had to overcome internal doubts and insecurities. It needs to be noted that God isn't looking for perfection, but just someone willing to be obedient and grow as they follow Him.
- You don't have to feel ready to be used by God. Often, God calls us forward and lets our confidence & ability grow as we walk.

***Application question:** Are you holding back because you feel unqualified—or are you trusting God to grow you as you go?*

2. Let Yourself Be Shaped by Others Who Walk with Jesus

- Timothy had both a spiritual heritage and a personal mentor.
- His mother and grandmother passed on their faith that was noted to be a “sincere faith” (2 Tim 1:5)

- Discipleship happens in a relationship, not just through the download of information.
- Timothy learned how to walk with God through his mother and grandmother and how to lead by staying close to the apostle Paul.
- Spiritual growth requires humility and trust. You don't grow by staying isolated—you grow by placing yourself into a life-giving community and letting others speak into your life.

Application question: *Who are the people helping to shape your walk with Jesus? Or how are you shaping those around you?*

3. Stay Anchored in the Word and Keep the Fire Alive

- Paul reminded Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God (2 Tim 1:6). Gifts from God aren't fully utilized when we neglect them, but they grow when we intentionally stir them.
- Holding onto the truth of God helps us stay steady. In a world full of noise and pressure, staying grounded in Scripture helps you have clarity of mind and confidence in your walk.
- Intimacy with God is what keeps your heart burning. Spiritual fire doesn't come from artificial hype—it comes from time with God.

Application question: *Are you consistently feeding your faith and keeping your heart stirred for what God's called you to?*

Week 5: Gifted to Give: Lydia

Date: Sunday 15th June 2025

Key point of this week: God can use your influence, resources, and faith to create space for the gospel to take root in everyone you encounter.

Key Scripture: Acts 16:11-15

Historical context, commentary + supporting references:

- Got Questions – Who Was Lydia in the Bible: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Lydia-in-the-Bible.html>

“If you had the cure to cancer, wouldn’t you usher it? ... You have the cure to death... get out there and share it.” – Kirk Cameron

“It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbour.” – Martin Luther

Character Study: Lydia

Lydia’s story may be short, but it’s rich with insight into what it looks like to open your heart to God and your home to others. She’s a beautiful example of someone who used her influence, resources, and faith to create space for the gospel to take root in a new place. Her story reminds us that leadership in the Kingdom often begins with a simple “yes” and a posture of hospitality.

We meet Lydia in Acts 16:11–15, when Paul and his companions arrive in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. It’s a significant moment—this is the first recorded time the gospel reaches Europe. On the Sabbath, Paul goes outside the city to a place of prayer by the river, where he meets a group of women. One of them is Lydia. She’s described as a “dealer in purple cloth” from the city of Thyatira, which means she was a successful businesswoman, likely wealthy and well-connected. Purple dye was expensive and often associated with status and royalty.

Lydia is described as a “worshiper of God.” She was already seeking truth and was open to God’s leading. As Paul shared the message of Jesus, something powerful happened— “The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message” (Acts 16:14). It’s a simple phrase, but it says so much. God was already at work in Lydia’s life, and when she heard the gospel, she responded with faith.

Right away, Lydia and her entire household were baptized. But her response didn’t stop there. She immediately invited Paul and his team to stay in her home, saying, “If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house” (Acts 16:15). Her home became the first base for the church in Philippi. That act of hospitality wasn’t just generous—it was strategic. By opening her door, Lydia opened the way for the gospel to be established in that city.

Later in the same chapter, after Paul and Silas are released from prison, they go straight back to Lydia's house, where they meet with and encourage the believers (Acts 16:40). This detail suggests that her home had become a meeting place for the early church in Philippi. It was more than a house—it was a hub for the movement of God in that region.

Lydia's story shows us how God can use people from all walks of life to advance His mission. She wasn't a preacher or apostle, but she played a key role in the birth of the Philippian church. Her faith was active—she believed, she was baptized, and she immediately began using what she had to serve others. She reminds us that kingdom influence isn't about titles or visibility; it's about availability and obedience.

Her example is especially encouraging for those in the marketplace, for women in leadership, and for anyone who wants to make their home a place of ministry. Lydia didn't separate her faith from her work or her household. She simply lived it out in every part of her life. She was spiritually open, quick to respond, and generous with what she had.

We don't hear much more about Lydia after Acts 16, but her impact echoes in the story of the Philippian church—a community that would go on to become one of Paul's most beloved and generous partners in the gospel (Philippians 1:3–5). Behind that story is a faithful woman who said yes to Jesus and made room for others to do the same.

Supporting points to key point:

1. Be Ready to Respond When God Speaks

- Lydia's heart was already open, and God met her there. She didn't argue or delay—she leaned in and believed.
- Faith grows when we act on what we've heard. Lydia didn't just believe quietly; she was baptized and took action straight away.

Application question: when God prompts your heart, how do you respond?

2. Use What You've Got

- Lydia used her home to build the church. She didn't preach the message, but she made room for it to grow. Hospitality is a powerful way to serve. You don't need a platform to impact others—sometimes it starts at your table.
- Lydia, also as a successful businesswoman was able to use her finances to further the early church.
- You can play a part in furthering the Gospel of Christ by opening your life to others. Hosting people, praying with them, inviting them into your life, etc. all create space for people to encounter God.

Application question: what is in your hand, whether it is your space, time, or resources that you can give to see the Good News of Christ spread?

3. Let Your Faith Touch Every Part of Your Life

- Lydia didn't compartmentalize her faith. Her business, relationships, and hospitality were all shaped by her belief in Jesus.
- She wasn't just a private believer—she lived her faith publicly. Her influence helped establish the first European church.
- Our whole life is a platform for God to work through. When Jesus is at the center, it changes how we lead, love, and live.

Application question: *is there any part of your life you're keeping separate from your relationship with God?*