



Salon



OPEN

Living faith-fully in everyday life

WEEK 1

Reflections by Nick Shepherd

Day 1



An invitation to everyday faith

READING

"Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Colossians 1.15–17

REFLECTION

Our daily lives are often very full. Full of places to be. Full of people to meet, things to do. For some, they may be full of time on our hands. Full of the hopes we would like to fulfil, things we don't want to face.

How do we find God in the fullness of life, and how in our every day do we find full-ness – abundance – of life? These reflections are designed to help us explore what our faith, our trust in Christ, means to us, and how we live this out in the whole of our lives. The beliefs we hold are a core part of our faith, but

faith is also a lived experience. There are points in life when we notice a need to rely on God more than at other times. The good news is that God is with us all the time, not only in crisis moments.

Today's reading from Colossians underlines this. Faith is connecting with the God who holds all things together. So, faith is found in our joys and cares, in our challenges and conflicts as we lean into God's presence and guidance. Faith informs our thinking and our actions as we discern how God might be using us in his work. Faith is an ongoing encounter with God. Faith is our everyday existence with the God who holds all things together.

RESPONSE

Take a moment to reflect on the fullness of your life.

Jot down areas of life that come to mind where you want to experience the fullness of God with you.

the one about...

Victoria's secret

Victoria is an apprentice hairdresser. She's 19 and she's been in the job just over a month. It's a busy salon so there's always something to do and it's almost always got to be done quickly. She's enjoying it – the people are upbeat, friendly – but she's been feeling the pressure. Three weeks into the job, and her vicar prays for her as part of commissioning her for this role.

Commissioned to wash people's hair? What difference does being a Christian make to the way you wash someone's hair? I wonder what you might say if someone asked you what difference does being a Christian make. When asked this question, Victoria didn't miss a beat: "I pray for them as I massage in the conditioner."



Victoria's praying is an invisible gift to her clients – soothing conditioner for the soul, not just the hair. Learning the pressure points that relax individual clients. Offering points for prayer for each individual created by God. Still, behind her actions lie a whole set of beliefs.

Victoria believes that her work – in a hairdressing salon – is important to God. And why shouldn't she? Isn't God present in all places? She knows that whatever she does she can do for God (Colossians 3.17) and that this work can be done in a distinctive way, that massaging in conditioner into someone's scalp is a way to bless someone, a way to love her neighbour as herself (Matthew 22.39).

Victoria believes in the power of prayer and in God's freedom to respond in the way that God chooses. She doesn't need to see the results of those prayers. But it's still worth praying – God will be listening to her. ●



Day 2



Everyday faith, ordinary actions

READING

"Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ."

Colossians 3.23–24

REFLECTION

A remarkable thing happened the other day. When my teenage kids were told that they had haircuts after school they both grunted with enthusiasm.

"What, with Nat ... ? Great, I like Nat!" Then they chatted away as Nat snipped away. No complaints and more conversation than I get out of them all week!

Our first story of everyday faith is about Victoria. Victoria is a hairdresser and sees this as a vocation. She cuts hair not just for the money, not only for the satisfaction of being creative, not even for the genuine pride found in using her skills to help people feel good;

but because she sees how God can work through her to bless others.

We all have a variety of roles to fulfil. We might feel strongly that one or more of these roles is our vocation. When we think of vocation, we might assume that this only applies to being a priest or to a select type of job, like being a nurse. Someone once described vocation as being where "our talents meet the needs of the world". It might just be that in some of the responsibilities that come in everyday life we can feel this connection. All Christians are called to serve God in God's world and the many roles we already have can be part of this.

This is what Victoria found in her role at work. That's her secret, not just praying blessings on the people she serves.

RESPONSE

How might God use you to bless others today?

What prayers of blessing can you offer as you hit "Send", clean dishes or fit fuse boxes?

Day 3



Faith is a curious thing

READING

"Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'"

Exodus 3.1-4

REFLECTION

When Moses notices the burning bush, he is busy doing something else. However, it was probably not unusual to see a bush on fire in that parched land. A lightning strike from a storm could set off such a fire as we see in forest fires today. That wasn't what Moses noticed, it was the curious fact that the bush wasn't being burned up. That was what woke him

up to the fact that God was present in that place at that moment.

I wonder if we often talk ourselves out of sensing God's presence in our everyday life. As the author Barbara Brown-Taylor says, most often we can put it down to having too much caffeine, or that there are "more important" things to think about. Why? Why don't we daydream a little more and wake up to God being around us in our every day?

Yet, like a good cup of coffee (or a cold shower if you prefer), we sometimes need a bit of a stimulus to wake up to God in our everyday lives. For Victoria, this involved being asked a challenging question on what difference being a Christian makes to washing someone's hair. I wonder what it was that got her curious, interested in where God might be present? I wonder what you might say to the same question?

RESPONSE

Is there some "little thing" you do in a way that consciously involves God? What might that thing be in how you undertake the roles in your life?

the one about... **No. 10**

Mike is sitting in a room with 14 other men, all from the same church. Richard, the group leader, has just asked them this question – “What are you good at ‘in the Lord’ at work?” A slightly jargony way of putting it, but nevertheless a good question about our gifts and how God might be using us. As if sensing a reticence to talk about something they’re good at (especially linked to faith), Richard suggests each person might like to write something down on a post-it note. “Who’s first to share?” he then ventures.

Mike is the first. He speaks quietly, tentatively really. “As some of you know, I am a policeman. I’m part of the armed protection team. At Number 10.”

He had the attention of the room at “armed protection”.

“It’s a pretty macho group of people and over the years there’s been quite a lot of conflict. And I’ve found that I am pretty good at bringing people back together.”

That’s all he says. And then he looks down at the coffee table in front of him. There’s a pause – not long enough to be awkward, but definitely a pause. And then someone says, “You’ve got a ministry of reconciliation.” A smile stretches across Mike’s face in recognition of this insight. Then someone else says, “Yes, you’re a peacemaker.” Which of course he is, not only in protecting people but in his team as well. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5.9). And here the group begin to unpack what it might mean to be people who show others what Jesus’ message of forgiveness is all about.

Mike had a sense that he had been doing something good but seeing this through the lens of the Bible showed him something else. God was working through him. Through *him*. Being Mike. ●

Day 4



Faith as virtues, not duty

READING

“Jesus said, ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.’”

Matthew 5.14–16

REFLECTION

Every day you will probably notice police on duty – guarding locations, undertaking crowd control at sporting events, responding to traffic accidents and any number of other incidents. Not all stories about our police are positive, but it would be hard to disagree that on the whole we’re glad that they are there – doing their duty.

Mike is an armed response officer. A high-pressure role. As a Christian, Mike understands that he needs

to fulfil this duty in a manner that reflects his faith. What does this look like for Mike?

Mike’s job – his vocation, maybe – is to keep the peace, but Mike has noticed that his duties are not the only way he is a peacemaker. Mike is often the person who will calm down an argument at work. The kind of colleague who won’t hold a grudge. Working this out has helped him to notice God at work through him in his everyday life.

It’s hard sometimes to picture what the coming Kingdom of heaven looks like. This is where the picture language Jesus uses in the parables helps. The Kingdom is like salt that adds flavour, a small shining light seen from far off, like yeast invisibly working, treasure we stumble across.

RESPONSE

We all have roles we can appreciate as service: as a friend, parent or sibling, as a tenant support worker, crucial supply chain link, baker or banker ... What is it about you, about the way that God is forming you, that really shines?

Day 5



Faith as joining up and joining in

READING

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour ... to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning."

Isaiah 61.1–3

REFLECTION

I remember once having a conversation with a police officer who was part of my church. She had had a really hard week as part of a team investigating a particularly awful crime. She was pleased to have fellow Christians with which to share how this experience of sin – very real sin – had not only affected the victims of this crime, but her as well. Taking a stand against the wrongs in the world is tough going – even if we are not faced with situations as difficult as this.

Our trust in living faithfully is that God is establishing the kingdom through what Jesus has done to defeat sin, and through the ongoing work of the Spirit. This is a transformation, however, that we are called to participate in. Following Christ in everyday life involves taking a stand, or a stance, towards seeking a world shaped by the values of this kingdom. The Christian writer John Pritchard suggests this will involve "constantly turning our lives towards God as a sunflower constantly turns its face to the sun".

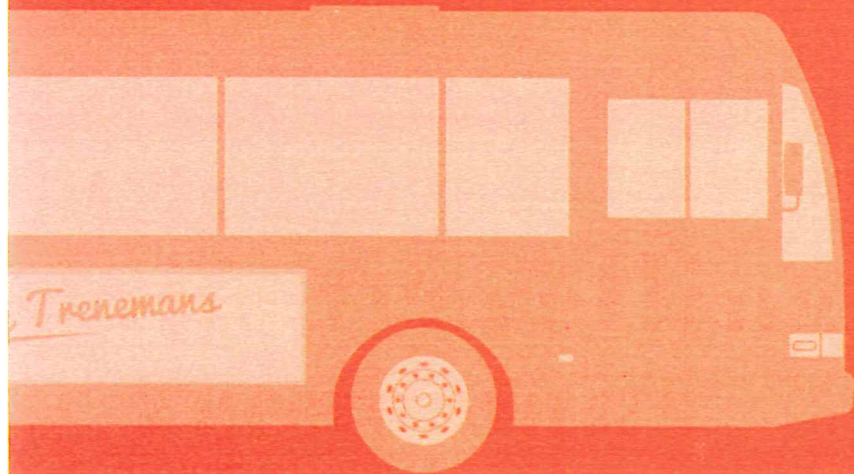
We grow in confidence and joy when other Christians help us see and celebrate what God is doing in and through us. How our small stands make a difference. This can be as simple as asking each other questions, or as profound as sharing our vulnerabilities.

RESPONSE

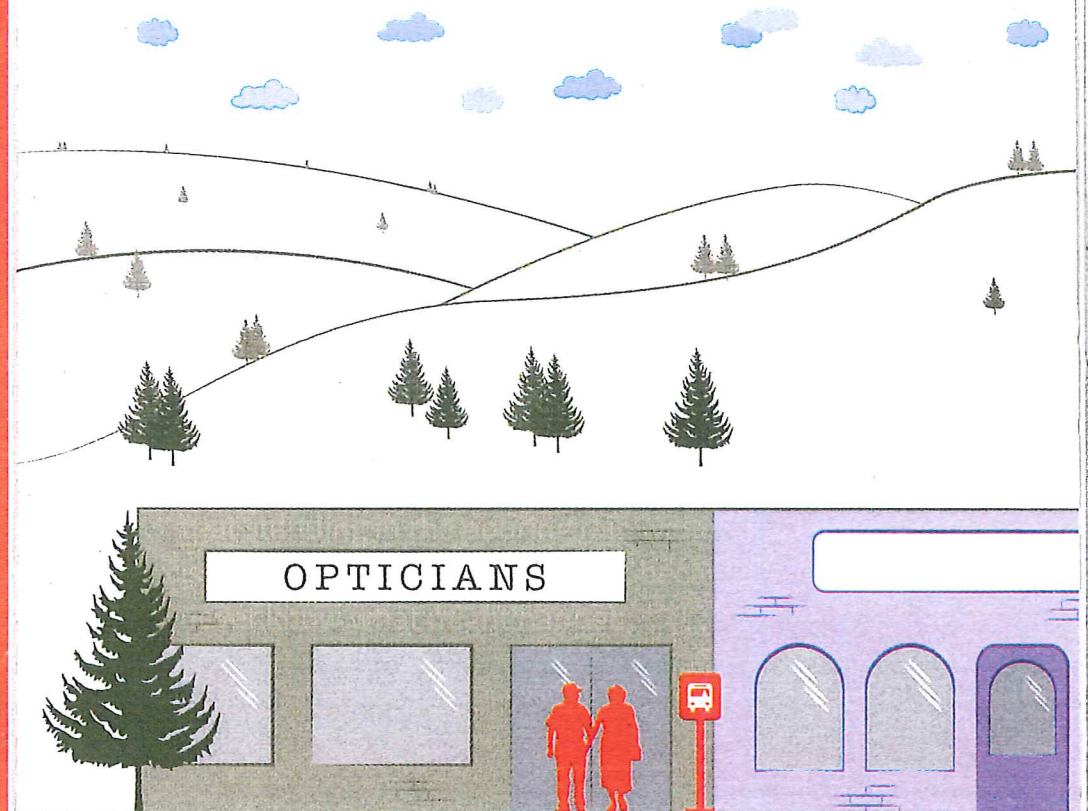
What has God been showing you recently about how he is working through you?
Why not share this with a friend or group.
Why not ask them what they think as well.

the one about...

the travelling Trenemans



Gary and Amahle Treneman do quite a lot of their travelling by bus. They've got to that age where it's free and anyway they don't own a car. Besides, it's always a bit of an adventure. Not because life has got so dull that standing in the pouring rain waiting for the 141 is the highlight of their week but because, well, they never know what might happen.



Just last week they were on the 288 coming back from the opticians. Amahle sat down next to a woman who started talking to her. She was, according to Gary, “quite young really, only about 78”. As it happened they got off at the same stop and Amahle said to her, “We are Christians and before we leave home, we ask God to guide us to people. We don’t stand on the street corner handing out booklets, but if a person starts a conversation with us we always like to offer one that talks about God’s love.” The “young” woman beamed at her, and gave her a big hug. And Amahle asked her name so she could pray for her.

Of course, God doesn’t limit the adventure of following nudges to their travelling. On one occasion, Amahle was itching to leave work and get home but she sensed a nudging to go to the canteen. Over the years she’s learned to recognize this as God’s prompting – the shepherd’s voice (John 10.27). While sipping a cup of tea, she heard someone crying some way behind her. She went over and introduced herself to Kiera, a young woman of about 19. This was the first of many conversations. Kiera is now a follower of Jesus. Whether it’s a walk to the canteen or a hop round the corner, every journey can be a mission trip. ●



Day 6



Freedom to live faith-fully

READING

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

John 16.13

REFLECTION

Gary and Amahle have got a freedom pass, and they're not afraid to use it. The chance to travel to new, or familiar, places is something that they relish. The opportunity to chat to new, and familiar, friends is a bonus of this adventurous spirit. They use this freedom to the full.

The Trenemans are living examples of the journey being the destination. As they travel on the buses they have opened this part of everyday life up as an adventure to take with God. They have learned to be open to God nudging them to speak or respond to the people they meet. Often with

just a greeting or a smile but always with an openness to talk.

Sometimes it can be easy for us to forget that God is often active in the everyday life of other people. It helps to be a little bit more curious about what God might be up to. Even if we can't see ourselves being as adventurous as the Trenemans, we can nudge ourselves to be nudged by God a little more. Sometimes this role is listening and learning. On the buses, in the school grounds, in the canteen ... wherever we journey.

RESPONSE

What might make something you often do a bit more of an adventure? Where is God nudging you to see an invitation to journey with the Spirit as your guide?

Day 7



Faithful guidance

READING

"Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' ... Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

1 Samuel 3.4–5, 8–9

REFLECTION

In The Book of Common Prayer, the prayer of Confirmation spoken by the Bishop is for the daily increase in "gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness". Confirmation reminds us that we are called to be disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit – not in our own strength. Though trusting in the presence of the Holy Spirit requires a bit of ghostly strength!

Hearing God's voice isn't easy. The Trenemans' story is one founded in decades of practice. When God spoke to Samuel, he didn't recognize this at first. It took Eli to share his wisdom for this to make sense.

Similarly for us God's leading comes to us mingled with our own thoughts, desires and feelings. It's always a good idea to seek wisdom from others, especially in significant decisions. However, here we're thinking about those nudges and promptings that happen throughout the day. Maybe we could trust these a little more – especially if they prompt actions that, while they might put us out a bit, are the types of gestures of interest and kindness we might all like to receive from time to time.

RESPONSE

Using the "examen" evening prayer today (see p.14), reflect on this week's journey and the ways in which you are becoming more attuned to God's voice. Note these and discuss them with a trusted friend.