



General Guidance for Small Community Leaders & Church Family Members -

This series involves members of our church family giving extended testimony to the way God is enabling them to bear fruit in the seasons of life in which they find themselves.

We've deliberately chosen a variety, to illustrate the reality of 'seasons' in our lives

- Some (like moving to be near the grandchildren) arise naturally
- Others (such as facing illness) come unexpectedly
- Some are welcome seasons
- Others are not

But the point is that God calls us and enables us to bear fruit in EVERY season of life, whether natural or unexpected, welcome or not.

You can watch an introductory video and listen to the session as usual on the resources page on our website: www.ccweb.org.uk/yog

We are inviting all small communities to use this series to encourage each member to reflect on the season of life they are in at the moment, and how God is calling and enabling them to bear fruit. We hope that everyone will have the chance to share testimony - and be prayed for - in the safety of their small community.

General Questions for the series:

- What season of life are you in?
- In what areas of life is God getting your attention - and how?
- How is God calling and enabling you to bear fruit in the season you're in?

If you're not yet in a small community, please do contact Neil (Neil.Shepherd@ccweb.org.uk) - you may want to gather with others informally to share testimony.

On 22 July at both the 10 and the 5 we will be having broader testimony-based input, under the heading 'Harvest Festival', as we seek to 'harvest' the good stories of all that the Lord has been doing in our lives over this 'Year of Growth.' We would be really grateful if you could send us a 30-second taster of your testimony recorded on your phone or other device, by 6th July. You can send them to us at: stories@ccweb.org.uk

You can find specific questions relating to this week's testimony below.

Gathering & Date - the 5, 10 June 2018

Title - 'Thriving in Pursuit'

Speaker(s) - Julia Loveless and Rebekah Stansbury

Reading - Psalm 119: 1-8

- 1 Joyful are people of integrity,
who follow the instructions of the Lord.
- 2 Joyful are those who obey his laws
and search for him with all their hearts.
- 3 They do not compromise with evil,
and they walk only in his paths.
- 4 You have charged us
to keep your commandments carefully.
- 5 Oh, that my actions would consistently
reflect your decrees!
- 6 Then I will not be ashamed
when I compare my life with your commands.
- 7 As I learn your righteous regulations,
I will thank you by living as I should!
- 8 I will obey your decrees.
Please don't give up on me!

Poem - Dream-Eggs - Rebekah Stansbury

Dreams are planted
Deep inside
Our spongy hearts
Before we are even born.
They lie, brimming-full,
Waiting quietly
To be discovered,
Or stumbled upon
by chance.
One day we might wonder
Up the ladder
With a torch,
And find them folded
In bleached newspaper.
What to do though,
In that moment of unwrapping,
Crouching in the dark,
Dusting off a dream
For the first time?
It's alien but belongs,
Like a photograph
Of us not remembered,
On a beach in front of waves,
Carrying bucket and spade.
We know the dream
Needs light to hatch,
As we need air to live.
It needs to be taken downstairs
And laid on the bare table
So that friends,
Holding steaming leaves,
Can see it, naked.
But what is there to say
About a dream-egg?
It is potential only,
Not a finished piece,
Albeit a piece of me.
What will they say?
Do I want them to...
The newspaper crackles,
The dream quivers.
It won't survive
If it's left in the attic,
That's for sure.
I'd forget about it,
Like a dream.

Main message of this testimony in one sentence -

SECTION 1: SETTING THE TALK UP

1. We are all called to pursue God.
2. We are all made to be creative. We are not all called to be artists.

SECTION 2: OBEDIENCE

1. We can be intentional about what we are pursuing by first recognising and acknowledging it and then by being single-minded about it; prioritising it, saying 'yes' when opportunities arise to progress and develop, but also 'no' to other things that might take up our time unnecessarily.
2. Obedience is both about our beliefs, our confidence in God's word and His promise to work it out in us, but it is also practical, down to the day to day outworking.

SECTION 3: REST

1. It is important that we learn to work/ pursue *from* rest, not *for* rest. It is countercultural; the world tell us to work for the weekends, but it is the way we were made to live. Think of Adam and Eve being born into the Sabbath *before* sent out to steward, Matthew 3:17 when Jesus is blessed *before* His ministry, and John 21 where Jesus feeds His disciples *before* asking Peter to feed His sheep. We work and pursue God's Kingdom from an overflow of time with Him, not for it.

Questions/ Reflections/ Prompts (suggested outworking of topic) -

(Please go over as much or as little of the below as you would like - it will be appropriate for different groups to cover/do different things. If your group hasn't yet had the chance to follow a 'prompt', perhaps talk about whether they would like to etc)

SECTION 1

- Question; Is God highlighting anything to you at the moment to pursue (be it something that you have always been good at/ enjoyed, that is part of who you are, or something new - see the poem, eggs, at the end of this handout for further reflection)
- Prompt; Given that you are a creative being made in the image of the Creator God, ask Him to show you how you can creatively interact with Him this week. Reflect on that time in the space below. Tell your Small Group about it.

SECTION 2

- Question; Following on from section 1, in identifying what you are pursuing at present, ask God to highlight what obedience looks like in it. (Be as practical as you can be!)

SECTION 3

- Reflection; 'It's easy to slip into the rat race in our performance-driven culture and work for rest, instead of from it.' (Quote from, 'Rest', Cultivate Devotional by Cageless Birds, Volume 4) *Reflect on the above quote. Do you feel like anything is stirred inside you when you read it?*
- Prompt; Carve out some time this week to slow down. Find a quiet place where you can immerse yourself in creation, be it a park, garden, beach or somewhere else. After you have found a place to be still in creation, take off your shoes, like Moses did before the burning bush. Let your heart be soft and vulnerable before God's presence like your feet are on the earth. As you stand with bare feet in the middle of the world God has made, ask Him to speak to you. Let His presence restore your sole to overflowing so that you can return to work from rest. (Prompt from, 'Rest', Cultivate Devotional by Cageless Birds, Volume 4) *Reflect on this experience. Tell your small group about it.*