

Sunday 25th May 2025 - A Time Of Sharing

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Date: 25 May 2025

Preacher: Lesley, Don, Marg, Carolyne, Cathy, Sian, Carol, Rachel, Tom, Barbara, Donna, Lily, Val, Alex, Gary

[0 : 00] Today is a bit different. It's an opportunity for us, if we wish, to share something that we feel maybe God has been doing in our lives. Ideally, as an encouragement for us all to hear. It could be anything. It could be anything that feels perhaps significant or big. It could be a small thing. It could be something that perhaps you might like to share that takes some time to share. It could be a very short thing. Instead, anything that speaks of your experience of God's care and involvement.

Involvement in your life. I appreciate with these it takes some courage to come up and maybe share something big or small. So it's a bit of a gamble. No one might have anything to share today, in which case it can be a very short service. We'll sing again, we'll pray again, we'll have drinks and then we'll go home. All right. But I suspect there might be one or two folks who've got something that they might wish to share and encourage us with. Okay, Leslie.

I always thought I had a really deep faith in the Lord. And I have only learned how over the last three years, it has got deeper. I was always one of these Christians that would sort of sit on the sideline and do everything I could without actually putting myself out there.

But just over the last three years or so I am putting myself out there and I am sharing my faith with other people, which I've never ever done before.

And only this week, in a queue in the bank on Friday, there was a couple of old ladies next to me. Not that I'm saying I'm young, but they looked a little bit older than I did.

[1 : 44] So we just started talking and it was about grandchildren and children. And one of the ladies said, oh, I've got four children. I've got a daughter, three sons. My three sons went to Iraq, but only two came back.

So me and the other lady, we gave our condolences to her. But I actually said to this lady, what was your son's name? And she said, Christopher, Christopher Baker. And she said, I'm Jean.

And I said, well, Jean, I hope you don't mind me saying this, but the Lord loves you and your son. And I'd like to pray for you. I've never done anything like that before. So it's only because of the teaching and the fellowship and the loving sort of responses we get here in church that have given me that courage to be able to stand up and actually say this to other people now.

So that's it. Well done, Leslie. Well done. Good to hear you talking. Jean and Christopher, you were saying was the Christopher's name of the son. Yeah. Let's pray for Jean. Let's pray and give thanks for Leslie's courage in just sharing God's love with her in that brave way in a bank queue.

Lord, we don't know Jean, but it was really encouraging to hear of Leslie just having the courage to get chatting and ask a few open questions and share your love with her.

[3 : 19] And we can't pretend to imagine what it's like to lose her son, Christopher, in his time in Iraq. And yet you understand all that comes with the grief and the pain that that will have given her and the family.

So we pray for Jean this morning that in some way she will know, please, your presence with her, your upholding of her today in a fresh way that helps her to appreciate anew your reality, your company, your compassion for her, your compassion for her.

And we give you thanks, Lord, for Leslie's courage in talking and sharing with her. And we pray, Lord, that right now something of that conversation might just come to mind for Jean, that she would be reminded of the love that Leslie shared with her and the news of your love for her in her own way.

And if our paths cross again, if Leslie's path crosses again with Jean, we pray that there will be further good conversations and good knowledge of your love infusing their talk, we pray.

Amen. Amen. All right. Thank you, Leslie. Good morning, everyone. You may not know that I suffer from chronic depression.

[4 : 3 5] That means that it's there all the time. It's in waves, it goes down, it comes up. But it's part of me, and I've come to accept that.

On a Friday afternoon, I helped to facilitate for a group of people who experience mental health difficulties.

It is the highlight of my week. It is something that I look forward to enormously. It is something that lifts me for that short while out of a depressive period if I am in one.

I had an appraisal. I had an appraisal. It sounds very grand, but it's just part of the way things work. It's a group that's affiliated with MIND.

And I was thanked by the manager of the regional MIND organization. Not just me. There was another as well.

[5 : 3 7] But I thought to myself, thank you for that. But don't thank me. Thank God for putting me here so that I can do this, helping other people, helping myself.

It is a joy that comes out of darkness. It really is. And thank you, Lord. Amen. Thank you, Don.

Thank you. Don and I have had various conversations over the years about the ups and downs of mental journeys and depression and so on. And I appreciate your honesty there, Don.

But also great to hear how God uses our lowest points and still brings light out of them. So thank you for that. I do have a very deep, close, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who I love dearly.

Coming here is a blessing. Doing what I do is a blessing. It's lovely. But I want to, today I just want to thank you, each and every one of you, for the prayers for Sharon.

[6 : 5 0] It's a miracle, really, the operation that she's had for cancer. She's had 10-hour operations with six surgeons. Her recovery has been tremendous.

She's been on the prayer chain. She's felt that prayer. I went to see her in hospital after the operation. And she said she really felt that prayer, which was just heartwarming, really.

She's now on this course of radiotherapy for six weeks. It's the third week starting this week. And she's marvellous. And I really, truly believe it's down to prayer, to love for you guys who have prayed for her when she's been on the prayer chain.

My love for this place continues and will always continue. It's wonderful. Matt, of course, is wonderful. The teaching, the people he puts in place to get us to learn stuff, to bring us closer.

I'm not the cleverest of folks. So the things I don't understand, I tend to put in a plastic bag and shove them under my chair for a bit until I can understand them. But I love you guys.

[8 : 01] I love welcoming. I love being church warden. And I really want to thank you for making me welcome, really, all these years. And everyone has been such a support in my life, in our life as a family.

We've struggled. Of course we've struggled. But we've had people from here looking after us, loving us, caring about us. And it's all this.

I come first thing in the morning at quarter past seven to set up for church. I sit there in a time of quiet on my own. I have my iPad-y thing on, not my iPad, you know, my phone on with music.

But that time on my own with him is just wonderful. It really is a waiting time with him. I sometimes smile.

I sometimes a bit emotional. Sometimes I need to sit in the altar on the bishop's chair because I need to sit on his lap because I need him a bit more. And it's this.

[9 : 02] It's you and it's this. And it's wonderful. So thank you. Lovely stuff, Mark. We love you. Thanks very much indeed for all that encouragement.

Good to hear Sharon is on the up with things. I know there's a long way to go and there's all sorts of treatment still to come. But we're glad to be partnering in prayer with her. And well done for being such a caring friend for her as well.

Thank you. Thank you. Two at the back. Two for one over here. Carolyn and Kathy. When I was here last Sunday, I wasn't feeling too good.

I've been struggling with breathing problems and different stuff. And I couldn't sing. So I was sitting there and I was listening to the songs.

And one particular song came up was King of King, Majesty. And I could feel inside me this bubbling emotion that I haven't felt since my dear friend Sue passed away.

[10 : 07] I haven't cried since she died. And it felt very odd that I had no feeling in that way.

I could laugh at anything and with anybody. But to be able to cry. And it just got bubbled up more and more. And it wasn't because I was sad. There wasn't any particular reason.

And it was only afterwards that I realised what God was doing. He was unlocking that box of grief that I've held for almost three years now.

If you don't know Sue, she passed away nearly three years ago. And I'd been on holiday with her to Corfu with another friend, Diane. And we were only back a week.

And she had a heart attack and died. And so to have, I can feel it now that I am going to be able to cry for this beautiful friend of mine.

[11 : 11] And one of my other friends, Betty, said, what happened? She said, I could see it. It was like spiritual surgery. The God, Holy Spirit was working on me.

And opening up that box. So that's what's happened to me. And I just thank God for all the kindness that he's always shown to me.

And to be told that I'm loved and cared for. So thank you. Thank you very much, Carolyn. Yeah, Sue was an amazing, amazing lady.

Just under three years ago now. She died. But her legacy lives on. And it was actually, literally, Sue's legacy, which paid for the kitchen that we have now in the church.

But that's the least of her gifts to us, really. She was very, very special to us. But great to hear from Carolyn. Takes time, doesn't it? Grief. And yet, I think one of the words that he's used for healing in the New Testament, the things that Jesus does, is a Greek word, therapio, from where we get the word therapy from.

[12 : 22] And that's one of the ways in which God works his healing in us. And as we know, therapy can take a long time to break through for us. No rush. But when the time's right, God knows what he's doing.

And we're grateful for you sharing that. Grateful for all that God's doing in you and that spiritual surgery. Nice one. All right. Thank you. All right, Kathy.

Hi, everybody. So I'm way out of my comfort zone. But just after Matt said that it can be about something really small, something just kind of popped into my mind that's happened over the last week.

And it's just a really small thing. So as some of you might know, I'm in every career and I'm a single mom and I work six days a week and have a very busy life. And I often feel like I don't really have very much time or energy.

I suffer with ME as well, very mildly. But it also means that I'm quite fatigued and my life feels as though it's all I can manage a lot of the time. So I don't kind of get involved in any big projects.

[13 : 22] And I often feel like I'd really like to have the time and energy to do more. But one of the really small things that I do is when I'm on my way out on my deliveries, I just say a little prayer and say if there's any small thing that I can do.

So I feel like God understands all of my limitations and restrictions and I feel like he doesn't ask more of us than we can do at any one time. So I often say if there's any small thing that I can do on my way around just to make a little tiny bit of difference to somebody, please let me know.

And so last week as I was on my deliveries, I pulled up to a house that I think I've only delivered to maybe twice before. Some customers are really regular. I'm there almost every day and I know them quite well.

And this was somebody that I'd perhaps delivered to a couple of times before and didn't know. But when I pulled up outside the house, I had a really strong feeling that there was something that I needed to do or say, which made me feel quite nervous because I wasn't sure what it was going to be.

So I just said to God, please put the words into his mouth or put the words into my mouth or just help me to know what it is that you want me to do on this particular delivery.

[14 : 29] And I opened the door and the conversation just flowed. And he told me within about the first two or three minutes of our conversation that he had tried to take his own life the week before and had been in a really, really bad place.

And yeah, God just gave me the words to be able to just talk to him. It wasn't a huge thing and it wasn't a lot of time. But when I left, I felt like maybe there was just some small thing that God had enabled me to say to him that hopefully had made a difference.

And it was only maybe a 10, 15 minute conversation. And I guess my message is just to say if anybody else is in the same sort of situation where they feel like they don't really have time.

And sometimes you come back away from wanting to open yourself up to God and say to him, whatever you want me to do, I can do. Because certainly for me, I think, oh, but I don't have very much time and I don't have very much energy.

So please don't ask me to do anything too big. And I suppose the message is just that he knows that and he knows where you're at at any given time. And just to be open to say if there's a little something that I could do that actually might make a big difference, I'm open to it.

[15 : 39] And just to sort of have the faith and trust in him to enable you to say what needs to be said or do what needs to be done in those, just those little situations in life that you might find yourself in.

And that's it really. It's just wanting to share a little tiny thing. Thank you. Thank you, Kathy. You may say that's a tiny thing. We know it's not at all.

Hugely significant conversation there. Thank you. And every courier delivery, isn't it? So I know your time constraints and all sorts as well as three kids and six days a week and so on.

Sounds cheesy, but it's every day with Jesus, isn't it really? And we pray that you will continue to know God's equipment of you to juggle everything, all your responsibilities and work and home life and all of that comes with that.

But also God will continue to do what he's doing and use you with the regular customers, perhaps, that he will continue to be a ray of joy for them, especially when they're in dark places, that you will bring God's light and God's love to them.

[16 : 41] Even if it's a fleeting smile, that's often enough to raise someone's spirits to get them through that day. But God bless you in all that you do day by day. All right. Sean.

I was thinking, well, I didn't really have anything to say, but it's what you said does really, you can feel when God wants you to say something because your heart starts going, blah, blah, blah. And it's well now, when I was working at Telford Park School, so I left about a couple of years ago now, I haven't had the best bosses in teaching before.

And when I was leaving, I got all these presents, which I spent the whole day crying anyway. But on my card, it's what is said on my card. And following on from what you said, sometimes it's not even what you say can make an impact if you've got God in your life.

So I used to, we started school. I had to be, what was it, quarter past eight? Way too early. And I used to bomb in and go, morning, everyone.

And they'd be like, they got to the stage where they just used to do the dial it down thing. And I was like, it may be too soon. But on my card, it said things like, thank you for your unwavering positivity.

[17 : 55] And I was like, I so am not. And then it's like, I loved seeing your smile. It really encouraged me. All these sort of things. And I was just, I really was.

Is that how they see me? And I thought, well, that's not me, is it? So it just makes you realise that if you've got God in you, that light goes out, even if you can't see it, but other people.

And it really, really shocked me, stunned me, but also blessed the socks off me as well. Thank you, Sean. Thank you. Thank you. You never dial it down.

You're doing great. You're doing great. Nice one. Thank you. Thank you. We're doing over in the corner here. Carol and Rachel. So over the last probably 18 months, I've been doing a lot of personal development in terms of reading and listening to things and different podcasts and things.

And very much, although they've not been necessarily overtly Christian things I've been reading and listening to, God's very much been in that. I've really felt that, and it's made me really reflect on the rest of my life and perhaps how I've been journeying and allowing other people's opinions and thoughts to influence me far more than they should have done.

[19 : 18] And I feel like I've kind of been freed almost, and it's still a journey, and as we know, a journey carries on the whole of your life. But I feel like I'm starting to see the real me and the person that God intended me to be all along.

I think back to when I was at school and I was always worried about, you know, I wouldn't want to do anything wrong and I wouldn't want the teachers to think badly of me. And I think that kind of went into my adult life, you know, worrying too much about, you know, what will they think if I do this or if I say that.

And I've realised now that that wasn't allowing me to be me. I think so many of us that that probably applies to, that God's made each of us unique, as unique individuals.

And there's some things we're going to be great at and other things we're not going to be so great at. And that's okay, because we're allowed to be just us, who we are. And it's just been so freeing.

And I've been learning more and more about just being the best of who you are each day. We don't need to be somebody else. We can just be us.

[20 : 31] I can just be Carol. So no matter how I'm feeling when I get up in the morning, you know, sometimes if you've not slept very well or you don't feel so good, you don't maybe feel like being the best of who you can be.

But you can still say, okay, I'm going to go into this day being the best of who I can be. And I might need a bit of help on this today because I'm really tired. But I've loved hearing the stories of like some of the little things.

Like Kathy, that was really beautiful because actually, even though you see that as something small, actually to that person, that would have been a huge thing. And you allowed yourself to be you and for God to use you, which was wonderful.

So Don, in your situation, I always think it's so amazing that you use your challenges to lift the people up. And you always stop and ask how I am, even though I know you struggle.

And so it kind of doesn't matter what we're struggling with or how we feel or we're not going to be any good to anybody. Actually, each of us has got something to give every day, no matter how we're feeling.

[21 : 44] We don't need to let our feelings get in the way sometimes. Yes, we're going to have ups and downs and life's a journey. And some days you might think, oh, that wasn't the best of days.

But that's okay because sometimes we're harder on ourselves than we need to be. And sometimes we say things to ourselves that we would never say to somebody else.

We really berate ourselves and are really hard on ourselves. And we don't need to be like that because actually God loves us just as we are. And we can just be the people and the unique people that God's made each and every one of us.

Thank you, Carol. Thank you. Yeah, it's this journey of becoming the person God knows and God wants us to be, isn't it?

That idea of growing in our identity in Christ. But that won't negate our own individuality either. It's a beautiful thing. Thank you, Carol. Thank you. I don't know if many of you know, but I suffer with cerebral palsy.

[22 : 51] And I come from a learning difficulty school. And when I left school, I'm in a position where I helped at a gateway group for learning difficulties.

And they see me as a bridge between them and the so-called normal people. And I feel like I'm in a privileged position to do that.

And now I'm working with Upstages, which is a learning difficulty drama group. And I'm there like in between.

And they come to me with their problems because I see me like the bridge between them and the so-called normal people.

And I'm in a thankful position to do that. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you, Rachel. God uses all of us in whatever form, shape, things we have to live with and deal with in life.

[24 : 02] And it's always good to hear how God is using each of us individually and uniquely. But thank you for that. It's very encouraging as well. Thank you. Anyone want to talk?

I suffer with Williams Syndrome disease. I did since I was a child. That's what I was going to say. Tom says you've got Williams Syndrome.

And you live with that your whole life, haven't you? I know a little bit about it. And it makes certain things that will limit you with life. But other things become bigger.

So you get a bigger personality sometimes, don't you? And a bigger smile. And you're very outgoing and friendly. And will talk to anyone. Which is a great thing.

You're one of my favourite people. Because the Vic's reopened now, which is great. Previously, under previous ownership and stuff, Tom was collecting the pint glasses, wasn't you? And everyone knows Tom.

[24 : 59] You were singing karaoke the other night, wouldn't you, as well? You're a sort of local celeb in that sense, aren't you? Everyone knows who you are locally in a good way. But one of the gifts of Tom is that he is the friendliest, most outgoing, most caring, most kind of people.

And you are very much loved. And I see a huge amount of God in you in the way that you relate to other people. See Jesus in the way that you care for them and you're kind to them.

So, yes, you have Williams Syndrome. But you are Tom. And we love you, Tom. And we're grateful for all that God is doing in you. All right, mate.

Hi, everybody. Listening to everybody's story. We do not see ourselves as other seers.

The good Lord has given each and every one of us a gift. We don't see that gift. But when you spoke to the man, he gave you the gift to talk and to hear.

[26 : 06] He gave you the gift of love. He's given Sian the gift of laughter. Unfortunately, the gift he gave me was me mouth.

No, I accept the fact sometimes I open it before I put the brain into gear. But I never mean harm. But he also has given me the gift to make people laugh.

But he's also given me the gift to hear and listen. Because that's what a lot of people need. Also, the experiences of life.

You were saying about the man trying to commit suicide. I'll put my hand up. So did I. But the good Lord wasn't ready for me.

He's put me here for a purpose. You lot suffer in it. But never mind. It's true. But the understanding now. That the good Lord gave me on that.

[27 : 08] He made me realize life is precious. And can I just share. And I'm praying I did the right thing. I sometimes hear words.

And my nephew had a stillbirth just before Christmas. What do you say to that? And all I heard was the words in my head.

And I'm praying I said the right thing to him and his wife. The little one became a sheriff. Not an angel.

Became a sheriff. Because it was too good for this earth. And I'm praying that they were the right words. I don't know whether anybody will agree with me.

And this is what I mean. Sometimes I open my mouth. Because my sister was aghast that I said such a thing. But I'm sorry. Hewins put up with me.

[28 : 13] Sorry. I just had to say. Thank you very much Barbara. Thank you. And you can hear with Barbara. You're very self-deprecating.

And you deflect it with humor. And you're very funny. But you also deflect some of it with humor as well. But you need to know. You are loved. We love you. You're great. You bring such joy. And life to us.

But I appreciate again. Life is complicated. And has been for you. But we're very grateful for you. And the vivacity. Is that a word? That kind of oomph that you give us.

So thank you very much. And the way that God's working through you in that. How are we doing? Any more? Any more Donna over here? Hi. Sorry. I didn't really want to say anything. But I really feel like I should.

So I've just got one word. And it is joy. For me personally. The last couple of weeks. Like everybody else. You know everything.

[29 : 11] Life has just gotten in the way. I feel like I'm in a whirlwind. And it's just getting darker and darker. Because I'm focusing on life.

I'm focusing on the kids. I'm focusing on being human. And I just felt like God say to me. Because I cried out to him. I was like. Why do I feel like this?

Why do I feel so exhausted? Why am I so tired? Why do I feel so far from you? And he said to me. You have forgotten your joy. He said.

You need to focus on me. And not on everything else around me. And I don't know if this means anything to anybody else. But it did for me. And he said that.

In all the times of life. When you start to. Start to feel a little bit negative. Or you start to get really busy. And you know.

[30 : 08] Oh you're on the school run. Or you're painting. Or whatever it is you're doing. You're at work. And it's a really stressful situation. He said to me. Just sing to me. Whether it's out loud.

Or whether it's just in your head. If you sing that little worship song. To the Lord. You are inviting him into the situation. Even if you don't have time to go.

Oh Lord please please be with me. Blah blah. Because you can say that. But sometimes. I feel like you don't mean it properly. Like a full meaningful. Even though you do.

But you don't give it the time it needs. But if you start to sing a worship song. In your head. Or out loud. You are then diverting your attention to him.

You are forgetting about all this. Woe is me. And I feel you know dark. And all this is getting to me. And that. You're then taking your time. And you're spending it with him.

[31 : 03] And he will make the situation better. He will be with you in that instant. And he will lift your mood. And your spirit. Like instantly. So yeah.

Just wanted to share that. Thank you Donna. Thank you Donna. Nothing to add to that.

That was brilliant. Thank you. Thank you. Lily. Hi. Sorry. It's going to sound like really shaky. So recently.

I've been extremely stressed. About school. And mocks. And BTEC. And I've recently finished. My music coursework. And I've also done my.

Like spoken language. For my GCSE. And. I remember on the day. Of my spoken language. I had English. The next lesson. And I had an assessment.

[31 : 59] And I had done. Really really bad on it. Like I knew I'd done bad on it. Because I was so stressed. About my. My spoken language. And I remember. After lesson. Going to my teacher. And being like. Miss I'm really sorry about this.

Like this is definitely. Not my best work. I feel really guilty about it. And my English teacher. She's such a lovely lady. Like she's Catholic. And she's. So amazing. Like she's so. She just fills you with joy.

If you see her. And I remember. Like speaking to her. And she was just telling me. How proud she was of me. How she was proud. That I've. Admitted. About this. And how she was proud. How I was handling it.

And she's also just like. Basically going on about. How like amazing. And how amazing I am basically. And then. She also started going on about. How I just needed to take a break.

And I just remember. In that moment. Not feeling like she was talking to me. But feeling as though. God was talking to me instead. And I remember after that. I did take a break. Because I've been so focused on.

[32 : 55] Or like obviously. Like I said. My BTEC. And my actual like. Mock revision. And I just remember taking a break. And then just in that. Two day break I had. I opened the Bible.

And I'm not a very. I find it hard to read the Bible basically. So I ended up picking it up. And just. Picking a random book. And just reading a random verse. And I can't remember what the verse is.

Verse is exactly. But it just said something about. Joy and kindness. And I felt like that really. Applied to. And my English teacher. But then B. Just how I felt. Because I felt so overwhelmed.

That I didn't focus on the joy. That I had in my life. And then afterwards. I went back to school. And it's been about two weeks since. And I've noticed. That I've like. Implemented that joy into my life.

Like implement the kindness. To everybody else. And it's just. It's really helped. And I've really felt. As if God's like. Spoken to me in the last. Three weeks ish. That's about it.

[33 : 54] Thanks Lily. So Miss Maiden. There. Lily's English teacher. When you're saying that. You felt it almost. It's like God speaking. And through Miss Maiden. To you. With God's words.

In the sort of human voice. In that sense. That's wholly encouraging. Because. We can all be Miss Maidens. To each other. In that. And you can hear from Lily. That the difference. That's made for you. And the help that's given you.

Which is great to hear. But even just the tiniest of words. Or encouragement. Or affirmation. Or noticing someone. That's God's words. If they're said in love. That is God speaking through.

Each of us. In any occasion. So thanks very much for that Lily. And a reminder. That it is to us. That each of us. If we speak with love and kindness. That'll be God. Channelling that love and kindness. To others.

Through us. Thank you. Anyone else? Yes. Sorry Val. I'm not very good at this. But I just wanted to say.

[34 : 50] That Don and I spent a while. In Tenerife. We came back in 2015-16. Now in Tenerife. We found a wonderful church. It was sort of.

Multi-faith. Multinational. And they were so friendly. And I was. I was baptized when I was 16. And I gave up.

Because I had never found a church. That accepted me. That nobody talked to me. Nobody made me feel welcome. And I just gave up.

And then when we went back to Tenerife. We met a lady. She was really nice. One of our best friends over there. And she. Well we persuaded each other.

We all really ought to go back to church. And we went to this church. And the welcome we got was incredible. Now Don got baptized over there. Then when we left.

[35 : 46] And we came back to England. We said we're going to have to search. Because we're never going to find another church. Like the one over there. And we waited a while.

And then one Sunday. We came in the back door. And just popped our heads in. And Dave Stanton was standing. And he said oh you've come in the wrong door. But he chatted to us.

And then I think it was Val renowned. And I think she was talking to us. And we met Matt. He was a curate. And we thought we'll come back. And we'll give it another try.

And do you know this church far surpasses the one in Tenerife. And we would never go anywhere else. Because everyone here is so wonderful. And I just wanted to thank you.

For giving us our lives in God back again. Lovely to hear. Thank you Val. And we're glad you're not in Tenerife as well.

[36 : 46] Although today might be nice. But I understand. Yeah. Thank you for that. Great stuff. Great stuff. Alex. Hi everyone. I've been arguing for the last 20 minutes with God about this. No.

No. No. I'm going to take. Well. Let's say. What am I now? 34. Yeah. 22 years ago. I'm 12. My mum dragged me along to a church in Aldridge. I'm kicking. Don't want to go. And I didn't like it.

Really didn't enjoy it. Shaked me out the next week. And I'm like. Mum. Come on. Come on. And a guy at the time called Rob. I know some of you might know from Aldridge. Rob Cook. Collared me.

He said. What are you doing Fridays? I was like. Oh. I don't know. He said. Right. There's a youth group. Come to this youth group. And you might start to enjoy church. And I was like. Right. Okay. Right. For sure. So I did.

I went along to this youth group. And I was met with the best part of 100 teenagers. In this building in Aldridge. Which I know. A lot of folk will know of. In here. Matt was the youth leader.

[37 : 43] Which as you can imagine. Was a. You know Matt. Don't you? So. Just. Yeah. Fantastic. And. So I was 13 now. And. Yeah. Grown up. Aldridge. The youth group. Fantastic.

I still call it the golden era. I was with a friend last night. No. Yeah. Friday night. Sorry. And the. You know. How you can reminisce about. The younger years. Specifically. Teenage youth groups.

Within churches. Yeah. Great. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. Loving it. Great. I go off to uni. And then you. Went to Bristol. Didn't you Matt. You went off to do your curacy. Then.

I was 22. And someone at the time said. You know. Why don't you come back. And be a youth leader. I thought. Okay. Right. Yeah. Never done that. But. Let's give it a whirl.

And I loved it. I mean. It was great. It was fab. Every Friday night. For years. Going along to this group. And Sunday nights too. And my wife Gemma. Who's. She's sadly not here. So she's quite unwell.

[38 : 39] At home. My girls. Well. Sorry. Just the one. She. I think she was 22 at the time. And her parents had bought her a spa treatment thing. And I was like. Oh. Very nice. Cool. So we went for a meal. Had this spa treatment at a hotel.

About a week later. The vicar at the time. At the church. He. He saw me on the Sunday. And he's like. Oh. You know. I'd love to catch up with you at some point. You know. See. I thought. Okay.

Sure. First time you've spoken to me. But. Okay. We met in the church rooms at the time. And. He said. It's been brought to light in a church meeting. That you've shared a hotel with.

Fiance. I'd say. At the time. We were engaged. And I said. Yeah. It was a little spa thing. And he told me. When I was 24. This was so. 10 years ago. He said. How does that kind of look.

As a youth leader. And I was like. I don't know. It was just a birthday present from parents. And he said. Well. This is me asking you to step down. From the youth group. As a leader.

[39 : 34] And I'm like. What? What? Like. We. I went straight to bed. Don't get any ideas. I said. Okay. It was a real shock. It was like. Huge.

And then he kind of insinuated as well. That. A fresh start in a church. A new church. Might be good. I'm just absolutely like. Lost here. I'm like. I've spent. What? Now. 12 years in this church.

It was really. Really hurtful at the time. It was. It was huge. But I think. I. You know. He. As a vicar. You just take. Kind of the word for it. Don't you. It's like. You know what you're talking about.

You're a man of God. You're a vicar. And then. I was 24. I didn't have anything figured out yet. I thought. Right. You're right. You know what you're talking about. So. We left the church. I had to leave the youth group.

I still went to that summer. We called it camp. We went to Wales. And set up tents. And worshiped God for a week. It was great. So. I still did that. Even though. He didn't want me to. I went against his will. He said. You're not going to camp.

[40 : 29] But I still went. Well. I was snuck in by the leaders. Should we say. I kind of floated for a year. Not really knowing. What I was meant to do. Because I was carrying so much guilt. And pain from that.

I thought. What have I done? This is awful. A church I've been part of for so long. I've grown up in. And don't want me. So to speak. And then we walked in through these doors. And I saw Matt at the front.

And I'm just like. What? Like. It's been. A long time. I had no idea Matt was here. And I'm just like. Okay. Right. And then I saw Gemma Wallace. I'm like. Whoa. And.

Yeah. I just. I guess I'm here just to say thank you really. Because. It'll be five years this. This year actually. Me and my wife have been here. We've had two kids. They've grown up through the church. And. I think the love.

The acceptance. The. You know. The compassion you've shown. And you don't. You know. You don't know me. The story. You don't know any of that. But. We just feel so loved and welcomed here. And.

[41 : 24] I still do. Carry that. You know. I made such a mistake. Still figuring that out. I don't know. Do you know. It's. But. I just know that actually. That's not me. And.

We are so loved and accepted here for who we are. And. It's something I'm still. You know. Carrying. I know that. I probably shouldn't hold it too tightly. And because. Not everyone gets it right. Do they? But.

When I was 24. Being told to leave the church. And step down from being a youth lead. It was pretty damaging. It was pretty hurtful. So. It's just a thank you really. Thank you for being so. Kind. As a congregation. To us as a family.

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. I met Al.

What are you saying? 22 years ago then. Long time ago now. He walked into the youth group I was leader at. And he was a teenager. And great to. Great to have him with us. Now. I think in all that. Alex was sharing.

[42 : 19] The bottom line is. Is love. And kindness. And welcome. And compassion. And inclusion. And God will work out the details. From that foundation. And I'm not going to say. Whatever. Went on or whatever.

But it's. If the foundations are loving. And kind. And compassionate. Everything else. Builds on top of that. Got to work out all the details. The most important thing is.

Do we love each other? Are we kind? Are we including people? Are we treating them. On the journey that they're on. In a way. With which we would like to be treated. And.

If you get that in place. I think. God will do the rest. All right. Okay. I'm aware of time. Any other. Final. Hands in the air.

Yeah. Gary. Last but not least. My friend. Good morning. Can I just say. By the way. When you're talking about age. Actually. You all look very young to me.

[43 : 14] Yeah. You do know that. Growing old is mandatory. And growing up is optional. I just want to say thank you. I know people said. You don't know me. But. And I'm not standing here to share my background with you.

But I do want to say thank you. But. I just want to share something in relation to what's just been said. Because. And I know I've had a conversation with Matt. And one of the things I said to Matt was. When I come to this church. I mean. Tom. I want to say thank you to you.

Do you know why? Because when I came. And I. We're in worship. And you're singing. And I'm really encouraged by that. So. Thank you very much. Tom. Yeah. And the things I've said to Matt.

Is. Is openness. Is an honesty. But not the man. But seeing in him. Something of Jesus. Which is what. I want.

Is what we all need. And I just want to. If I may. I couldn't help but think of. Matthew. 11. 28. Which. You know that scripture. I'm sure you. Come to me.

[44 : 13] All you are weary. And have you laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. What I really wanted to say really is. He is the source of comfort. Isn't he the joy. Not. Not the person.

Not the man. Not this. And. You understand. And what I hear people sharing is. And you know. You recognize that in your life. You know. When we're struggling. And we're searching. And we're seeking. That God alone.

Is the answer. And if we come to that place. That's where we find our rest. You understand what I mean. Yeah. So. And I'm encouraged by. The conversations I've had with people here. And your lives.

And the expression of those things. So I want to say. Thank you for that really. Yeah. All right. And encourage you. So whatever your experience today. I know people have shared. And the struggles you have is. I think we're so easily overwhelmed.

By the things of this life. That's true. Isn't it? Or pressured by those things. But if we could take time. Just to come to God. And ask of him. And then. You know. We will find. The peace that we want really.

[45 : 08] So. Thank you very much. Thanks Mike. Thank you guys. Thank you. Thanks.