

Session FOUR: Reflection

*The purpose of this session
to discern what God may be calling us to do*

*Timings of this session
around 90 minutes*

*You will need
to bring the record of what you discovered in sessions 2 and 3*

*Welcome everyone to the session: [10 minutes]
ask everyone to share something they have valued from the last session.*

Introduction: 1 Kings Chapter 17 verses 8 - 16 [15 minutes]

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.' As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' But she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.' Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For

thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.' She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.



Spend some time together sharing your responses to the story of the widow of Zarephath. How does she take risks and live out her faithfulness?

Pause for prayer:

[5 minutes]

God of grace and rich resources,
we confess to you the gifts we hide away and won't share,
preserving them for the future
rather than risking them here and now.

We offer to you the gifts we hope will multiply,
as we share them with love and care
for the benefit of all your children.

We seek wisdom to know the gifts we need to uncover,
and the ways they can be used
to help our neighbours in faithfulness to Jesus,
our friend and brother.

Amen.

Sharing our experiences:

[20 minutes]

At the end of our last session you were invited to have a chat with someone in your church, maybe with someone you didn't know that well.

Spend some time now sharing together how it felt to have that conversation. (This not about sharing the content of the conversation, which stays with you and the other person).

- How important is relationship-building for growing new life in your church?

- *Think about ...*
- *How did the conversation feel?*
- *What helped you both relax?*
- *What did you learn or what would you do differently next time?*

Going deeper ... Reflection

[30 minutes]

It can feel a big risk when we offer to share our seemingly limited resources with others. Like the widow in the story we may feel we are eking out what we have left to see us through our final days. How would it feel to offer what we have to others generously as a way of bringing new life and celebrating our story so far?

This sort of giving can help us to rediscover our true riches, both material and spiritual, and get us sharing them with new people in new places. As we do so we are likely to uncover connections between what's happening and stories from the bible which inspire us and speak powerfully to us and those around us.

It's all about working *with* other people not doing mission *to* them. We are not getting *them* to help *us* either. The vision is that all people of good will in our community can work together for the benefit of everyone, each offering what they can.

Taking stock:

The Pastoral Cycle

- *take a look again at the pastoral cycle diagram from session one*

Experience: Listening to our community; its needs and opportunities

- *Take a look at any notes you made during session two*
 - What have you learned about your community, the current needs and potential new relationships?

Exploration: Understand ourselves better; what do we have to offer?

- *Take a look at any notes you made during session three*
 - What have you learned about your church(es), both the challenges and opportunities?

Reflection: What's our mission; what is God now calling us to do?

- *Thinking about the faithfulness of the Widow of Zarephath ...*
 - Does our church have a jar, and if so what's in it?
 - How do we live out the widow's example of hospitality generosity, and risk?

Silence and Prayer:

Take some time now for silent prayer.

- What is God saying to us? - How do you feel now?

Next steps?

Action: Working with others to benefit the whole community

By now we hope you have a clearer picture of your church(es) and the surrounding community, to refocus on your mission in that place. But ...

- *Moving from Reflection to Action is often where we get stuck ...*
 - How do you now share what **you** have learned about the needs around you and resources God has given you so you can bring **others** along on this journey?

Below are some ideas for your next steps.

- Offer to share what you've found out together with a Church, Elders, or Missional Partnership meeting
- Explore other bible stories about building relationships, responding to need, and encountering 'others'.
- Talk and pray about what you've done so far - in worship, over coffee, and with other people in your church(es) and community
- Involve your Mission Mentor and others you know who can help
- Organise a meal or party and invite anyone you've chatted with along this journey, sharing with them your discoveries and ideas
- Offer the community groups you visited a conversation - a chance to explore how you might work together in partnership
- Invite groups (new or existing) to visit your building, put the kettle on, and explore working together not just 'room hire'
- Ask 'others' how they would currently describe your church. Think about how best to tell your church what they've said!

Homework:

Think about what stories you want to share about your journey, then go out and do it!

Closing prayer:

In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams. **Amen.**