

# SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

## in uncertain times

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### 5. Praying for non-Christians

This group exercise has 5 sections. You may have time for all five, or just one. Either is fine.

#### 1. Making a list

Each member of your prayer group has a life that brings them into contact with lots of people. Ask them to list the names of those with whom they have regular contact. Probably some will list lots of names, others just a few. Then ask them to cross out the names of those they know to be wholehearted Christians – today you are praying together for non-Christians.

Ask someone to read Mark 4.20. Explain that by the word of God Jesus means the gospel, the good news, which we as his disciples are meant to share widely. No one can become a Christian without hearing this good news, but when they do hear it the outcome depends on the state of their hearts. Jesus says there are 4 possible responses; ask the group what they are.

Ask everyone to write the word '*heard*' against each person on their list whom they know has heard the gospel; and then to note which of the 4 responses they made. Invite people to tell the group about those on their lists who have heard the gospel and how they responded. Then spend some time together praying for each person who has been mentioned.

Begin with silence, during which each person should ask God 'who should I be praying for?' As soon as someone knows who to pray for they should go ahead and pray, and as they do, the others should switch their attention to the prayer that is being spoken. Once the prayer is finished, the group reverts to silence until someone else knows that they should pray. If some members of the group do not speak out prayers at all, you will need to ask each person to pray for the person sitting next to them.

#### 2. Sharing hospitality

One of the contexts in which the gospel can be shared is through hospitality – either when we offer hospitality to our friends, or when they offer it to us. Sometimes it is just chatting with one other person over a drink or a meal. Whenever hospitality is shared, the relationship moves to a closer level. Ask the group to go through their list of names and write the word '*hospitality*' against a name if hospitality has already been shared. Then ask group members to talk about the people with whom they have shared hospitality. Finally have a time of prayer in which each person mentioned is prayed for.

#### 3. Engaging in conversation

We all have conversations with other people, if only about the weather. The best conversations are heart-to-heart conversations, in which we share our feelings and listen to those of others. Ask group members to go through their list of names again and write '*heart-to-heart*' against anyone with whom they have ever had this kind of conversation. Ask each person to share what these conversations have been about and with whom. Follow this with a time of prayer in which each person mentioned is prayed for.

#### 4. Witness by life

The word of God does have to be spoken, but it also has to be witnessed to by the way that we behave. We can call this 'witness by life'. Examples of witness by life are making sacrifices for other people, going the second mile, not bearing grudges, or refusing to cross moral boundaries. Ask group members to go through their list again and write



the words '*witness by life*' against each name where a person has seen faith in the gospel demonstrated by we behave. As before, follow this by a time of sharing and prayer.

## **5. Sharing the good news**

Experience shows that if there has been hospitality, heart-to-heart conversation and witness by life, it is very easy to engage someone in a conversation about the gospel – and often this happens naturally. Ask the group to list people for whom all these three things have occurred but sharing the gospel has not yet happened. As before, follow this with a time of sharing and prayer.

If you have not had time for all five sections, complete the exercise on another occasion.