

nibbles 2

pastoral meeting moments

AIM

This material is for you to use before you visit someone. It is offered as part of the planning and preparation that goes into a meeting moment, when one person goes to meet another in circumstances of particular need.

STRUCTURE

Each meeting moment is based on a Bible passage. A reflection and prayer are also provided. The would-be visitor should spend some time reading, reflecting and praying before their intended visit. Choose the meeting moment that best suits the situation of the person you expect to meet. Better still, now you've got the idea, make up some of your own.

1. IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

Before you go:

We are invited into a fragile space when we come into someone's home. Homes are an expression of the people that live in them. At a time of pain or loss the home has become a sanctuary, and we are welcomed in on the provision that we do no harm.

In such painful situations we are reminded that while we can empathise with the emotion we cannot share the person's unique experience of their loss. Our situation or past experience is not a template for everyone else. We can share the emotion of anger, despair and confusion though, knowing how they could be a barrier between us and God. This situation may feel like a time of complete isolation for the person, who may even feel separated from the image of a loving God. But we are called to remember that even in the seemingly empty spaces God was there before us; in light and shade.

Many a time, all that is required is a simple listening ear to let the person share their experience. We are called to be alongside the person not to jump into the hole with them. We can be the hand that pulls them out, reminding them that when they are ready God still waits.

Read: Psalm 91: 11-15

Reflection:

God knows our inner most feelings; even when those feelings are anger and disappointment at Godself. Of course God has no magic wand to get rid of those feelings for us. We have no choice but to go through them, working out for ourselves where God is in our difficult time. At this time our friends and neighbours long to help us; to share a word of comfort and ease the pain. God's angels surround us through our friends and family. Even if there is no emotion in our remembering, with our heads we can remember the promise that God has made to us. We are not alone when we walk in the shadows of life. There is opportunity to see light in all situations.

Prayer:

Loving God, in the darkest moment of our lives, help us to wait faithfully and peacefully until we can accept you are with us. May we feel the comfort of the knowledge of your presence; through loved ones, special moments of joy and through the flicker of hope. Be with(name) now as they long to feel release from this situation of.....(name). May they be aware of your love within them, healing and transforming them.

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2. REDUNDANCY

Before you go:

There can be a range of emotions tied up in redundancy, whether sudden or planned. Among the initial feelings could be a sense of failure, loss, (loss of identity, loss of self worth) anger and frustration. Over time there may be financial worries, boredom, lack of direction. It will take time to work through the emotion and through the situations that redundancy presents. In time there is hope that the redundancy could be seen as a release to do something new, the opportunity to take a risk, a chance to fulfil that unexpected hope or dream. However, it may take time to feel positive!

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-13

Reflection:

This famous passage is often used when things seem to go wrong – to reassure us and encourage us. But you have heard the joke – “if you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans”. Both seem to say the same thing: we have our plans for life but God often has different ones. It really helps to remember that God wants the very best for us. We may feel that we are in the best situation and very happy but it may not be a situation that fulfils our potential. If we listen to the ‘still small voice of God’ we may hear a different call on our life. God never stands still, just look at creation. That means however much we dislike it, we too are caught up in that re-creation. Behind us it may look like there is ruin, our feelings deeply hurt by what we sense as failure, but now God looks to the future and our response.

There are stories of people making radical changes having had the sudden pain of redundancy. They have fulfilled dreams they never thought possible. These possibilities may be ahead for the person you will visit, but for now you need to be the listener, the sounding board. Yet, even today it may be possible to take a small step forward.

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you that you know us so well and want the very best for us. You have given us gifts and skills that have enabled us to work. Now as we face change, we thank you for the past; for our work place, with the people and situations we learnt from. Help us to look with courage to the future, a future with you in it at its heart. Help us to find your call on our life and have the courage to respond.

3. THE ‘EVERY DAY’ VISIT

Before you go

The purpose of this visit may be unknown at the time of going. Many pastoral Elders, or Church friends have a list of people to visit and ‘check up’ on them regularly. This is a good time to take someone’s spiritual temperature, find out how they are getting on at church, whether there are unused gifts or skills they would like to try out, or even general questions. There are times when a deeper issue is highlighted during a gentle chat over a cup of coffee.

Read: Ephesians 1:11-19

Reflection:

Thankfully God has made us all unique. Not just in our character, behaviour and physical appearance but in our spirituality too. We are all walking along a path towards God but we

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are at different stages. We cannot compare ourselves with other people, where we are is right for us. God doesn't want us to stand still though and is forever encouraging us forward. Take a moment to think if there is an area of your life you would like to change.....is it practical or spiritual. Are we where God wants us to be? Are we doing what God wants us to do? None of us are complete.

Prayer:

Loving God, we praise you for the way we are so beautifully made. We thank you that we are part of a bigger family; our immediate family, our friends, members of our church. We belong to each other and to you. We thank you for all that you teach us through one another. We bring (name) to you now: all that they are, all that they do. We pray for a deeper revelation of your love and wisdom in their lives. That(Name) may be brought to the fulfilment of their potential through you.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

- What was the most helpful thing?
- What was the least helpful thing?
- What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more meeting moments then Meeting moments 1 is for people who are meeting in a lunch club or over a meal somewhere.

If you want to read more about Pastoral Visiting and the Bible look at the document on the training section of the website about Elders, the Bible and Pastoral care.

If you have written some meeting moments yourself, why not send them in?

This one was contributed by Bridget Banks.