

## Inspiring Spiritual Reflection

Our first priority of the new Church Development Plan is “*to inspire each member of the church family to take the next step in their journey of faith*”. Our hope is that this will encourage our church family to reflect on their own personal journeys of faith and to help us all in moving forward.

There are so many different ways to think about our spiritual journey - something which can be both complicated and very personal to us. Being at peace on our spiritual journey is as important as our health and mental wellbeing.



## My Next Step

This is for us all, to help us find the next step that God is urging us to take, as we draw closer to Him. As with all journeys, standing still gets us nowhere. The decision to take steps to grow in faith is exciting. As you consider this journey, we hope that some of the ideas contained here may be helpful.

### 1. Where am I?

Perhaps start by thinking about where you are today, and what happened in your life to bring you here. Were there particular events, insights, encouragements from others, disappointments, disagreements etc. which changed your relationship with God, and brought you to where you are now?

Take some quiet time to think about your journey so far.

### 2. What might help me journey further?

Are you willing to take the next step on your journey? If so, where do you sense God is challenging you/ calling you? This is not an exercise in discovering all the things we don't do – but in discovering which particular thing(s) might help your journey forward. You might pray about every step you take in your journey of growing in faith. Remember, the Holy Spirit wants to guide and teach you how to grow in faith.

### 3. Where Next?

Perhaps you might think about the one or two things God is prompting you to take on board. There are some thoughts below that may help – remember focusing on just a single thing is far better than highlighting a dozen! Perhaps look for that one thing (or maybe two) that God might be saying to you or laying on your heart.

Journeying forward may not be by doing more tasks. Sometimes we can drift away from God by doing too much, or doing the wrong thing(s). Our busyness or our sense of duty can take away from our sense of being close to God, feeling his love, knowing his approval – simply for being who we are!. We may actually need to do less or live differently in order to regain or build our closeness to God. For some our relationship with God could be undermined by being too inward looking, and not reaching out to others in the way God would like us to.

Other things to consider on this journey might be: Will I go alone or who will I go with? What help will I need? What do I need to take with me? What do I need to leave behind? How will I travel... and perhaps: When will I start? Also think about how any changes I make might affect those around me.

Before looking at new ideas, it may also be helpful to consider the following questions.

1. What has helped me to grow in the past?
2. What got in the way of my growing more?
3. What might help me take the next step on my journey?

Here are some ideas. Do any of these feel right for you to consider?

**Joining in at church:** Coming more regularly; joining a small group; becoming part of team; chatting over coffee and making new friends

**Getting to know the Bible:** Reading a passage each day; taking time to reflect on a passage; delving deeper to understand a passage; working out what it means for you personally and how you live your life

**Learning to worship in new ways:** Worshiping in private; worshipping in a group; singing; using silence; dance; worshipping with your whole being; opening your heart and allowing the Holy Spirit freedom as you worship

**Learning to Say Sorry to God:** As a daily practice; for something you regret; sharing with a trusted friend; making confession in church personal to you

**Making time for God:** Reviewing how your time is spent; breaking a habit; leaving the phone off; sacrificing the occasional coffee stop; reducing TV/internet time

**Learning new ways to pray:** Setting aside a regular time and space; initially putting aside your agenda and just enjoying God's presence with you; taking time to listen to God and respond; praying with someone else or in a small group; thanking God even in tough times

**Helping others:** giving your time for God to use; looking out for someone in need and helping; finding joy in serving; praying for others

**Giving freely:** giving mindfully from the heart and not out of duty; giving regularly and reliably to the church; finding joy in giving

It may also be helpful to know that your decision to journey may be met with opposition from the enemy. Satan doesn't want your faith to increase, so he may do things to hinder your progress, such as overwhelming, discouraging, and isolating you.

For each thought that has jumped out at you, you might try considering the following questions.

### **1. What can I do about it?**

There are no right or wrong answers. Different people may go about the same thing in different ways. This is to help you think through how you might take these thoughts forward.

### **2. What will stop me doing this?**

There are many things that can stop us growing in our faith. Some of these are very much down to us to make changes in our lives.

If there are things that need to be cleared out of the way, then it's good to face up to them first. Here are some thoughts:

**I have no Time:** I'm too busy – family, work, sports, hobbies, screen-time

**I'm not good enough**

**I struggle with doubts about faith and:** Science, evolution, suffering, miracles, gender diversity, other faiths, and more

**I've lost focus, let my faith drift**

**I'm afraid of:** Failing, looking foolish, losing my credibility, losing my friends

**I'm feeling overwhelmed:** I've no time; no energy

**I don't know how to do this:** I can't explain my faith; I don't know how to start; I feel out of my depth; I don't know what God is calling me to or what gifts he's given me – or even how to find out!

### **3. What help and support might I need to journey forward with this?**

Look at your answers, and see if there is anyone who might help or anything that St Nicolas could do, or do differently, to help you grow in faith.

The sort of things might be:

Talking through your thoughts with someone

Daily Bible Readings / Meditations

A course / teaching about...

Personal prayer ministry / encouragement

A spiritual buddy / prayer partner

Different styles of worship

A team or group to join ... and much more besides!

Then let us know by using the online form '*Next Steps*' on our website, or by sending an email to [nextsteps@stnicolasbookham.org.uk](mailto:nextsteps@stnicolasbookham.org.uk).

We will treat all of your contributions anonymously.

Once we have received all the feedback, we will look for common themes. We then plan to run some discussion groups to understand how the church might best help each of us to continue on this journey of faith.

May God bless you in this endeavour.