

# Trek Discussion 1

## 'Inward Journey Outward Journey'

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The group that you start today will be walking together for six weeks. The way you start is important, so include hospitality, food, a cuppa or a drink. What we are going to be thinking through together is vital stuff. But relationships are the most important thing.

First get acquainted. You could do it your own way, or use some of the following questions:

1. *What's your name?*
2. *What's your favourite form of locomotion? Eg. Walk, run, crawl, drive, fly, swim etc?*
3. *What are you hoping for in this group for the next six weeks?*
4. *What are you giving up for Lent? What do you think of the practice of fasting?*

Now start the right way – with prayer!

### INWARD JOURNEY AND OUTWARD JOURNEY

In a beautiful book called *Outward Journey Inward Journey* Elizabeth O'Connor explores two important sides to following Jesus. She points out that living as a Christian is like a journey. Jesus is our 'way' or 'road' and following him has an outward and an inward side.

**Outward Journey**

- What we taste, see, touch, achieve, do, our actions and morals.
- In Christian life: serving, giving, building, helping, healing, talking, etc!
- Active doing of things that change the world around us (for the better).

**Inward Journey**

- Not felt with the five senses, the life of faith deep in the heart/mind.
- Involves just 'being' in the Spirit, in Christ, in prayer, in the Word.
- This is not 'public' stuff and cannot be easily judged or seen by others.

Both are vital. Jesus Christ calls us to both outward and inward life. But we tend to prefer or neglect one or the other depending on where in life we are.

### **Group Discussion:**

- *Make sure you all have the difference clear in your heads first.*
- *Don't be embarrassed if it's not clear as it is a strange concept! What does it mean to you?*
- *Imagine someone who thinks following Jesus is only "inward journey." How might they live?*
- *Imagine someone who thinks following Jesus is just "outward journey." How might they live?*
- *Think about your own life for a moment and discuss:*
  - *Which of these two (inward/outward) is easier for you?*
  - *Which are you focussed on more right now?*
  - *How do we cultivate the 'inward journey'?*

## **INWARD JOURNEY AND OUTWARD JOURNEY SCRIPTURE**

On the following page are a collection of five Bible passages. Quietly reflect on each of these Bible passages one by one. First have someone read each one out loud, then pause for a short quiet time. Then discuss the three questions for each of the Bible passages:

1. *What do you hear in this?*
2. *Where is the 'inward journey' or 'outward journey' in this verse?*
3. *What does it reveal about the love of God?*

### *Mark 3:13-14*

*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out...*

### *Mark 12:30-31*

*The greatest commandment is this: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.'*

### *Psalms 51:5-7*

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.  
You delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.  
Cleanse me, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

### *Proverbs 4:23*

*Above all else, guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life.*

John 15:4-5

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in them, that person will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

## WHEN THE OUTWARD REPLACES HEALTHY INWARD

Mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) did not live long but left incredible wisdom. He believed in Christ is famous for saying “there is a God-shaped hole in every heart.” Only Christ restores our soul and we are not whole unless the gap in our heart is filled by Christ. This is how he put it:

*“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself”*

- What do you think of the quote? What does this bring up for you?

People try to fill up our ‘inward need’ for God with ‘outward stuff’. Consider the following examples of people doing ‘outward’ stuff.

- Buying that new thing (phone, car, handbag, you fill in the gap!) to cheer yourself up.
  - Always helping others, constantly serving or giving but looking ragged and never stopping.
  - Online addiction (porn, social media, websites or even just reading news compulsively).
  - Always dressed perfectly, done up to the nines, never able to seen just casual.
  - Always stimulated: having the TV, radio, music, friends, and noise.
- *How might these ‘outward’ things distract from the ‘inward call?’*
  - *What is our ultimate need?*
  - *Who makes our inward journey whole?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

You could just finish right here. If people have had enough that is OK. Finish with prayer. Do the prayer your way! Alternately, if there is time (or if people are hungry for more) you could quietly meditate. You might even use the imaginative prayer approach of visualising the story in your head!

## *1 Kings 19:3-13*

*Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

*All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

*The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.*

*And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*

*The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind.*

*After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.*

*After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.*

*And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

*When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*