



# **Motivating mission**

Using the 'Couch to 5k'  
model to empower  
evangelism in your church



evangelical alliance  
together making Jesus known



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Evangelical Alliance  
176 Copenhagen Street  
London  
N1 0ST

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# Evangelical Alliance

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The Evangelical Alliance joins together hundreds of organisations, thousands of churches and tens of thousands of individuals to make Jesus known.

Representing our members since 1846, the Evangelical Alliance is the oldest and largest evangelical unity movement in the UK. United in mission and voice, we exist to serve and strengthen the work of the church in our communities and throughout society.

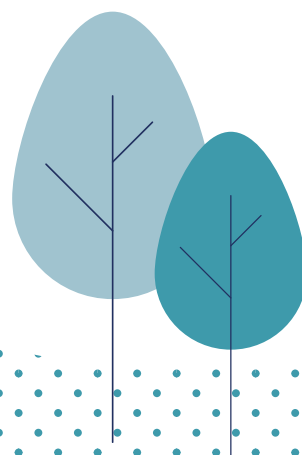
Highlighting the significant opportunities and challenges facing the church today, we are committed to sharing fresh ideas, celebrating best practice and catalysing innovation throughout the evangelical community and beyond.

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# Welcome to

# Motivating mission

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**At the Evangelical Alliance, our vision is to see the UK church united around a shared passion to make Jesus known. As we've worked with churches and spoken to Christians about sharing their faith, however, it's quite common to discover that evangelism is not everyone's favourite topic**

In 2020, we conducted the Changing Church survey on several different areas affecting Christian life, and as part of it, we wanted to find out why many people feel underconfident or ill-equipped to share their faith.

## **When asked what the main barriers were to sharing faith:**

- 44 per cent feel they don't have enough significant relationships with people who are not Christians;
- 27 per cent fear rejection or appearing different;
- 18 per cent are unsure how to answer difficult questions; and
- 15 per cent never see any opportunity to talk about their Christian faith in conversation.

In response to these potential hurdles, many of us tend to propose practical solutions linked to people's capability or opportunity, for example, dealing with issues of apologetics or encouraging people to build stronger friendships with non-Christians. While these are necessary steps in the long run, we've realised that we might need to start further back.

Starting to share your faith is a little like learning how to run regularly. The 'Couch to 5k' training programme has helped thousands of people get moving, and we think it's a great analogy for sharing faith as well. To get into running, you need to start with a desire to actually get off the couch and get moving. From there, you learn how to warm yourself up for the task ahead and the basics of what you're getting into. Next, it's all about building your confidence for the task. You then find strategies to keep running for the long haul.

Similarly with sharing faith, you begin by wanting to do it. You need motivation to get off the metaphorical couch, and from there you can get to grips with the basics of how to share our faith, answer difficult questions and strategise for evangelism long term. For many of us, this might not be a linear journey, with some having confidence but no opportunities, while others may have the answers but no confidence. We also might have a go at sharing our faith and be knocked by setbacks. With this in mind, we still believe that the following resources and advice will help you and your church progress in evangelism, wherever you're starting from.

To help guide you and your community on this journey, we've looked at a wide range of evangelistic resources and categorised them as follows:

## Stage 1: Mindset motivators

**How to get off the couch**

## Stage 2: Foundation training

**Stretch your legs with the fundamentals**

## Stage 3: Confidence builders

**How to answer difficult questions**

To end with, we've given you some top tips on how to continue cultivating an evangelistic culture, so we can all keep running for the long haul:

## Stage 4: Endurance training

**Strategies for evangelism long term**

Throughout this booklet, we'll point you towards some resources which we highly recommended. We'll also give you examples of what a 'runner' or witness to Jesus might look like at each stage of sharing our faith. All of us are in different stages when it comes to evangelism, so we hope these examples help you see the vast array of experiences and approaches and enable you to identify yourself and members of your church community on this journey. Finally, along the way you'll find some 'track talk' moments, which are our top tips on how to use resources, language or ideas to cultivate an evangelistic culture in your community.

Time to head to the track.



# Stage 1: Mindset motivators



## How to get off the couch

**For someone to decide to start running, they need to believe that running is both enjoyable and beneficial.**

In relation to evangelism, we can often skip this step, assuming a person already has the motivation or desire to share their faith. As you think about people in your church, how do you think they would answer the following questions:

- How would you describe your feelings towards the activity of sharing your faith?
- In your opinion, is evangelism a positive or negative activity?
- How regularly do you think you have opportunities to share your faith?

For Christians to more regularly share their faith, helping them believe the activity is both enjoyable and beneficial is important. We also want Christians to recognise that we all have opportunities to share faith, even in the smaller everyday encounters. So, to start with, we need to think about how we make this possible. There are obviously many practical ideas to explore, but this area also highlights the immense importance of prayer in evangelism. Praying for the desire to share our faith is a crucial first step in gaining the motivation to witness to Jesus, as well as see the opportunities.



### Runner #1: Lina

Lina grew up in church and despite always hearing about the call to make Jesus known, she's never felt like it personally applies to her. Her church doesn't run evangelism training so she feels poorly equipped to share her faith even if she wanted to. Fear and apathy are her biggest barriers, but recently Lina has started to pray that God would give her the confidence to want to share Jesus with her friends.



## Runner #2: Mike

Mike became a Christian later in life. When he was new to faith, he started lots of conversations about Jesus with his family. Unfortunately, he regularly felt like they were only listening to be polite, so the conversations didn't go anywhere, which was disheartening. Now that Mike has been a Christian for longer, he feels like he should give it another go, but he's nervous about bringing up Jesus again.

**If you or members of your community identify with the examples of Lina, Mike or others in a similar place, we'd recommend starting with the following resources to help understand our call to share Jesus and how we build a desire to do it:**

### Empowered

Written by Rebecca Manley Pippert, Empowered is a small group course about sharing your faith which seeks to excite and equip people for evangelism. It aims to help you start conversations that naturally lead to talking about faith.

### Faith Pictures

This unique resource from Church Army aims to be a first step in helping a wide variety of people think about sharing their faith.

### Remember When

From the Evangelical Alliance, Remember When is a four-week small group resource that encourages Christians to actively remember stories of God's faithfulness and use these memories to fuel their desire to share their faith and boost their confidence.

### Thy Kingdom Come

Started by the Church of England but supported across many different churches and organisations, Thy Kingdom Come is an annual call to pray – between ascension and Pentecost – for people who don't yet know Jesus.

**Through these resources, we hope that you can help members of your church see that sharing Jesus is both enjoyable and beneficial, and lead them towards the example of Isaac below (runner #3) who's raring to go and looking for some direction on what to do next.**

# Track talk

It's important to remember that while we are all called to share our faith in Jesus (evangelism) as in Acts 1:8, some of us have the specific gifting and passion to do it (evangelist) as in Ephesians 4:11. Many people in the church will not identify as an evangelist, but there is still a role for everyone in making Jesus known. This is where we find it helpful to use the word 'witness'. In a court of law, a witness simply has to say what they've seen and heard, and that is all Jesus asks us to do as witnesses to Him. The majority of people in any church are more likely to be witnesses than evangelists, but it's vital that we provide ongoing evangelistic support for people in both groups. An example of how to support the evangelists you've identified in your church is to connect them with a local group for evangelists.

## Advance

Advance groups are a great way to connect with other evangelists near you to be encouraged, equipped and empowered for evangelism.



### Runner #3: Isaac

Isaac recently built up the courage to tell his work friends that he goes to church at the weekend. It was the first time his colleagues found out that he's a Christian, and while no one made a comment, Isaac isn't sure how to take the conversation further and whether he's even allowed to talk about faith at his workplace.



# Stage 2: Foundation training



## Stretch your legs with the fundamentals

**As we start to think about evangelism, we can sometimes paint the picture that we need to be running 5km straight away.**

In reality, however, there are lots of smaller steps to take before we're able to confidently run long distances. So then, what are the evangelistic equivalents to getting the right kit, stretching, planning a route, walking, jogging in small bursts, running 1km, running 3km, and so on?

When we have a desire to share our faith, the next step is gaining confidence and capability to do it, not attempting to immediately run a marathon. Through small steps, we can start to better understand what evangelism looks like and how we could give it a go. Every small step is an achievement, so by celebrating each moment we can appreciate progress, however slow it may seem. The key is to pace ourselves, not running before we can walk, and making sure we're confident with the basics before we start running away with ourselves.

## Track talk

More often than not, when we hear a talk about evangelism it's delivered by the evangelistic equivalent of a marathon runner. While it's always good to have something to aim for, many of us can feel discouraged by how far ahead they seem. When planning evangelism training or teaching, try to ensure you have a mix of abilities leading the content. By all means hear from people who are naturally gifted evangelists, but also ensure you listen to and learn from the experiences of those who aren't as far down the track and might admit they've got lots of room to grow in this area.



### Runner #4: Sue

Sue's friend recently hosted a coffee morning to eat cake and casually chat about faith with some non-Christian friends in the village. Sue's been really encouraged by the positive stories her friend has shared and would love to set up something similar where she lives. The trouble is that she knows plenty of people to invite but just doesn't know how to get the conversation started.

**Both Isaac and Sue demonstrate a great desire to share faith and have already identified some clear opportunities to do so, but they aren't sure how to go about it.**

Once we're at that stage, we must metaphorically stretch our muscles: get to grips with what we're aiming to do and prepare for our first steps. Here are some resources to help you do just that:

## Living the Conversation

A short, practical booklet from Navigators UK, featuring a framework for why and how Jesus shared the gospel, and how to train others to do the same.

## Living & Telling

A free 10-session training resource for small groups from Agapé UK to inspire and equip Christians to share their faith naturally as a way of life.

## Sharing Jesus course

Created by Andy Frost at Share Jesus International, this course is designed for small groups to learn more about sharing your faith.

## Speak Up

From the Evangelical Alliance, Speak Up is a practical guide to your rights and legal freedoms to share your faith.

## Story Bearer

Phil Knox's book and accompanying small group material helps Christians explore personal evangelism through storytelling.

## Talking Jesus – The Course

A comprehensive small group course about evangelism, based on the original Talking Jesus research around how people come to faith.

## The Natural Evangelism Course

A simple yet insightful six-session small group course, created by J. John, on sharing your faith.



### Runner #5: Li

Now in his second year at university, Li has already chatted to several friends about his faith. As his friendships have developed, so have his conversations, and his friends are now asking him more complex questions about Jesus and theology. Li doesn't want to shut down the conversations, but he isn't sure he has the right answers to their questions.

For those who have used the evangelistic resources mentioned, you're likely to be at a similar stage to Li. It's really encouraging when you've already had a few good conversations, but as trickier topics are brought up, it's easy to feel out of our depth and unsure how to progress. One option is for your church to facilitate opportunities where people like Li can bring their friends to ask questions. This takes the pressure off Li, as other people can answer his friends' questions, and demonstrates to Li's friends that Li isn't the only person who believes Christianity is true. Below are some courses that allow you to create this space:

## Alpha

A multi-week course available to use in local churches, prisons, with students or young people, offering the chance for everyone to explore the big questions of faith.

## Christianity Explored

By studying Mark's gospel over seven weeks, this course allows those exploring Christianity to do so through the scriptures and in a safe environment to ask questions.

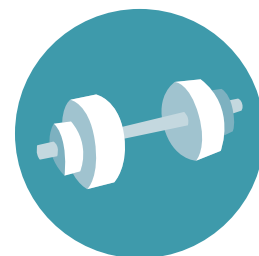
## The Wellbeing Journey

A course to give people the opportunity to explore faith through the lens of holistic wellbeing.



# Stage 3:

## Confidence builders



### How to answer difficult questions

**Once we've found our motivation and warmed up for the task ahead, we might begin to find that we're actually more competent than we thought.**

Much of this is down to the Spirit's work in us, giving us the right words when we need them and opening up opportunities around us. That's part of why it's so important to remain in step with God's Spirit and follow His leading, as we often find He gives us the boost we need at just the right moment.

As we begin stepping out more regularly and confidently, however, we might start to notice gaps

in our own knowledge or ability. Tricky questions arise, or we discover our friends are hung up on a particular topic that we don't know how to help them overcome. Rather than allowing these bumps in the road to knock our confidence, the best approach is to see it as an opportunity to keep growing.

Practise is crucial in gaining confidence and competence as a runner, and it's just as important in evangelism. Progress might seem slow, but regularity helps us keep improving little by little each time. We might not always feel like this progress is linear, but by sticking at it, working on areas we struggle with, and continuing to practise, over time we will see growth.



### Runner #6: Ray

Ray has been part of a local football club for years and has built some really strong friendships with the other guys through practice sessions and their regular pub trips after training. Everyone knows Ray is a Christian, and several of the guys have asked his advice on more personal issues. A few have accepted Ray's offer to pray for them but don't believe that church or Christianity would be their thing, so Ray is looking for ways to change their perspective.

Similar to the examples of Li and Ray, we might realise that there are certain topics, parts of the Bible or ways of presenting the gospel that we're not very confident with yet. These make it harder to answer questions, keep the conversation going or overcome apathy in our friends. The following resources help us to explore different areas of evangelism and expand our ability to make Jesus known effectively in certain contexts:

## Bethinking.org

A website created by UCCF to help young people explore difficult questions about the Christian faith.

## Men

A small group resource on specifically sharing your faith with men or starting a men's ministry in your church.

## Discovering Jesus through Asian Eyes

A small group course on sharing faith with people from an Asian background living in the west.

## Track talk

Any runner will tell you that there are some days when you feel like you're flying and others when the whole thing feels like hard work. Once again, the same is true when it comes to sharing our faith. Sometimes a conversation springs up naturally and the person is open to hearing about Jesus. Other times, it takes a bit of gumption to start the conversation and we're quickly being asked questions we can't answer. In these situations, the key thing is to be honest. Rather than pretending we know everything there is to know about Christianity, it's better to admit we're not sure and, perhaps, commit to looking into it for them. These moments of honesty reassure others that we too are still learning about who Jesus is and what it looks like to follow Him.

## Friendship First

Interserve is a small group course on sharing faith with Muslims by primarily focusing on building robust and honest relationships.

## Short/Answers

Solas have created short and sharable answers to tricky apologetics questions about the Christian faith.

## The Word One to One

A resource to equip everyday Christians with the confidence and ability to read the Bible with friends exploring faith.



### Runner #7: Alicia

Having just had her first baby, Alicia has met lots of fellow young parents at a local class for carers and babies. One of her new friends is from a Hindu background and is struggling with the demands of motherhood. Alicia is really keen to share the gospel and offer to pray with her as she has done with another mum, but she's worried that she might cause offence.

# Stage 4: Endurance training



## Strategies for evangelism long term

**It's the case with any new skill or hobby that while we can pick up the basics on our own, we often need help from others to improve and keep going. People are far more likely to take up or re-start an activity when they are:**

1. Part of a community with people like them who do the activity.
2. Given regular encouragement to keep going or tips to improve by those who are more experienced.

When we apply this to evangelism, we can see the vital role of sharing stories within the church community of times when people have shared their faith. This helps us learn from each other's experiences, but it also reminds us that we're not alone in our efforts to make Jesus known. As the saying goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." If we're going to stay the course with evangelism, we need to mobilise our whole church communities to do it together, setting the pace, spurring one another on and keeping at it even when we're going uphill.

### Runner #8: Gill

After retiring, Gill realised she was losing touch with old colleagues, so a friend from church suggested she create regular excuses to stay in contact through book clubs and walking groups. Over the years, two of her friends have become Christians. Three of the others aren't there yet, but Gill and her friend from church pray together each week that Gill would keep finding opportunities to share Jesus with them.



Many of us would love to have Gill's commitment to making time for her friends who aren't Christians, maintaining those relationships and seeking every opportunity to make Jesus known. The important thing about her example, however, is that her friend from church is supporting her evangelism every step of the way, praying with her and suggesting ways to keep going.

Humans and animals alike will run much further when they run together rather than alone. The resources we've recommended in this booklet should get you a long way in stretching your legs and starting to run confidently, but when it comes to building stamina for the long haul, we recommend a 'pack' mentality:



## Runner #9: Kamal

Kamal discovered a few years ago that he was naturally gifted in sharing his faith with other dads in the playground. There were always questions he couldn't answer, but somehow the Spirit gave him a way of responding that kept the conversation going, and he often came back to a topic a few days later. A couple of church friends asked him how he kept bringing other people to church so regularly, so the three of them set up a group to learn from each other as they grew in their evangelism.

## P – Prayer

The more regularly your community prays together for your witness to Jesus, the more alert everyone is to opportunities to share faith; these become answers to prayer. Pray for discernment to spot the opportunities, courage to take them, wisdom for the right words and strength to persevere even if we experience setbacks.

## A – Accountability

If we never talk about evangelism, it becomes easy to forget about it from one week to the next, never seeing any progress in ourselves or growth in our community. Ultimately, we want people to feel excited about the call to share Jesus, understanding that it is both possible and essential that they try it themselves.

## C – Community

Every church should have a Gill or a Kamal in it, hopefully several of them. It's important that those people are identified so that the whole community can be encouraged by their stories and learn from them. There will always be people further ahead on this journey than us, so let's create space to share stories, hear from those who are seeing fruit in their evangelism and allow others to ask questions or share concerns. These conversations within the community not only improve our effectiveness, but they also remind us that we're not alone in our efforts.

## K – Keep going

No one wakes up one morning and can suddenly sprint 5k after no training. There may be one-off moments where we feel God uses us in a particular situation, but more often than not, effective evangelism takes practise. Jesus Himself encountered hostility when sharing the good news, so we should not be put off when we face opposition. Instead, we ask God to help us stay the course, we reach out for encouragement from our community, and we keep persevering in the race set before us.

