

Remember when in lockdown...



evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known



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Welcome to this special **#RememberWhen** session, designed to help you and your small group process what we've been through during the coronavirus pandemic. It's an opportunity to share some of your experiences from lockdown, what you learnt about yourself and your faith, and begin to recognise moments of God's faithfulness that you could share with others.

As we look back on the pandemic, there might be a tendency to write it all off as wasted time, characterised by change, disruption and, for some of us, great pain. But we worship a God who wastes nothing and who brings beauty from ashes, so we also want to be people who remember that God is faithful in all seasons and share that good news with others.

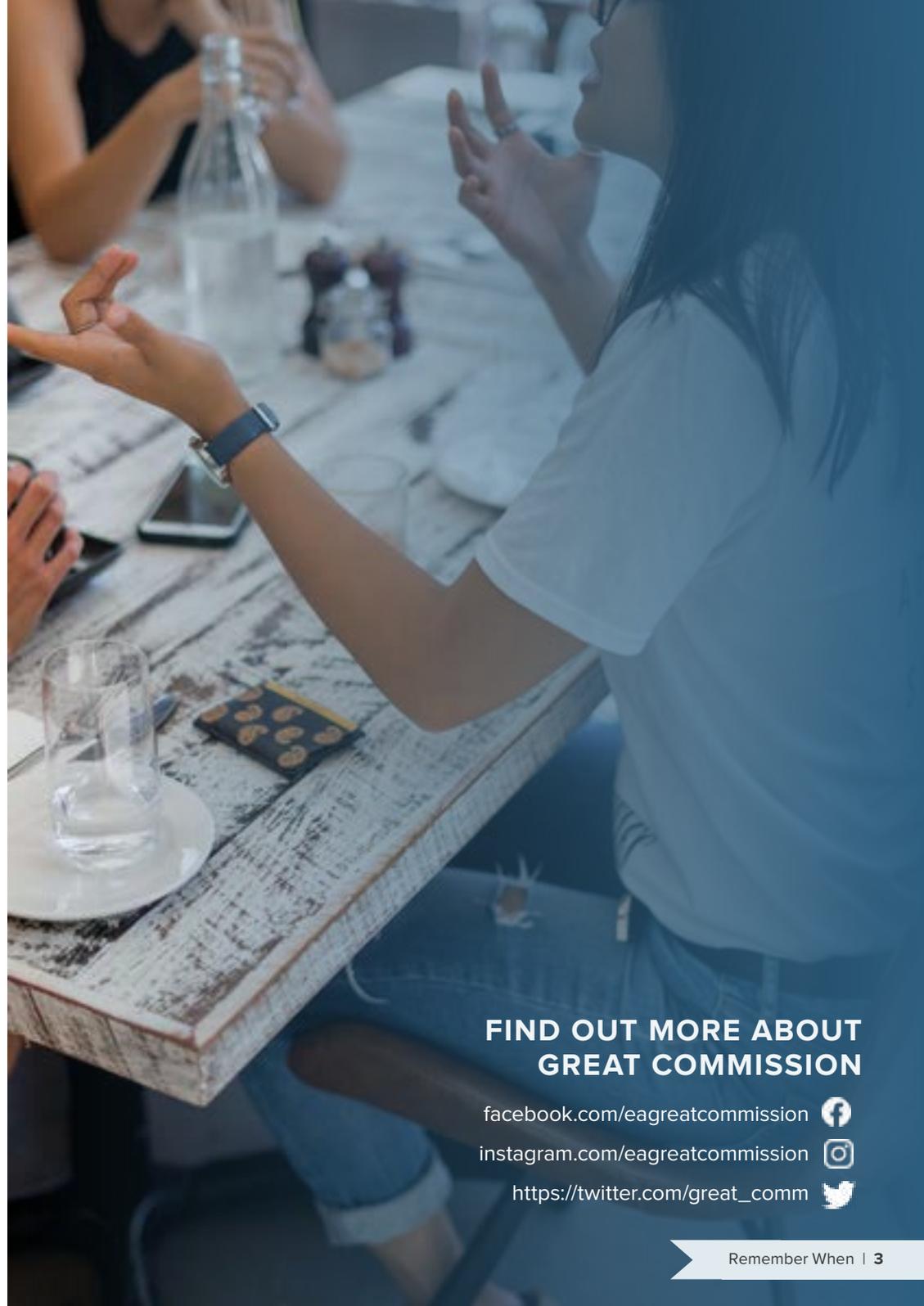
As the Great Commission team, we believe that if you take time to reflect on the pandemic, you will remember God faithfully walking with you in every moment. Some reading this may have experienced the sad loss of loved ones, jobs or relationships, while others might have appreciated the change of pace or the chance to be at home more.

Whatever your lockdown experience, your stories of God's faithfulness throughout can help your friends, colleagues and relatives to process their own disorientation, offering them a chance to experience Jesus' love, healing and hope where they need it.

We hope that this time together brings you peace as you work through your experiences, but that it also emboldens you with the desire to share honestly with others about the sustaining and comforting presence of God through it all.

Eve Paterson

Great Commission lead



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Small Group Session

TEACHING NOTE

Everyone has had a different experience of lockdown. Within this session, we've tried to accommodate people's experiences as broadly as possible, but as a group leader, you know your group much better than we do. Please feel free to shape this session however best suits you and your group as you process your experiences of lockdown and prepare to share those stories with others.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN...?

(5 MINS)

Ask the group about their shared memories of the pandemic: Do they remember tuning in for nightly press briefings throughout lockdown or that Sunday morning when, it's thought, the church broke Zoom? Were they one of the families that did weekly quizzes online or got a lockdown puppy? Did they take to baking, spending ample time in the kitchen rustling up sourdough or banana bread?

SETTING THE SCENE

(5 MINS)

Ask the group: What stands out to you when you think about your personal experience of lockdown? What is the defining event, place or emotion that immediately comes to mind when reflecting on that time?

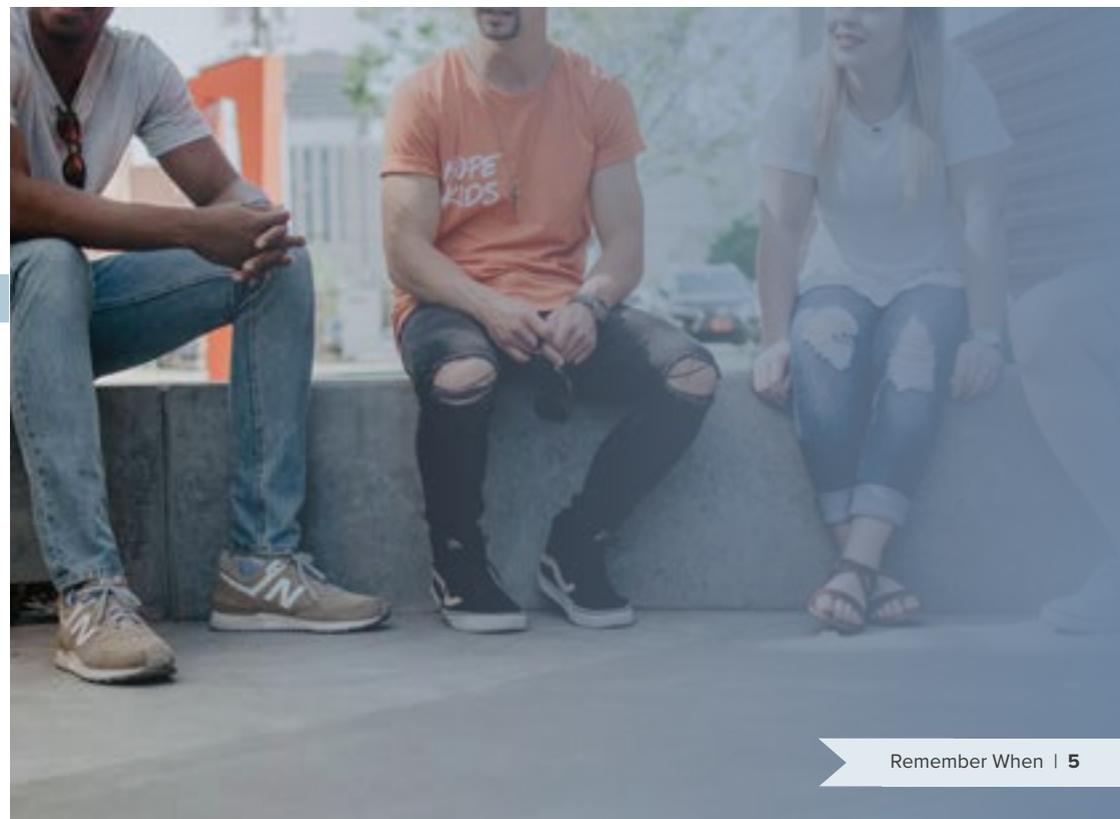
READ | RUTH 1:1-22 | CONSTANT THROUGH CHANGES

REFLECT

(20 MINS)

Encourage the group to discuss the following questions, based on the passage. We have offered some key ideas you might want to draw out:

- Ruth and Naomi's story is all about how we respond to unexpected changes in our plans. How would you have described the way you cope with change before the pandemic? What have you learnt about your response to a change in plans or a shift in landscape that maybe you didn't realise before?
- Ruth makes a commitment to Naomi that she will stay with her and honour her faith. Who are the people who stuck with you through lockdown, or the people you chose to support?
- At the end of the chapter, Naomi says to call her 'Mara' because she feels bitter, a level of emotional honesty that we sometimes struggle with in our culture today. Do you feel comfortable being honest with God and others about your feelings, especially pain or disappointment? What do you find are helpful ways to express these emotions?



TEACHING NOTE

The church can be a great space to share our experiences, to be honest about how we're feeling, and to receive support and guidance from one another. It's important for us to recognise, however, that there is also a time and place for medical support. While members of your group are sharing their stories and emotions, be mindful of anyone who might benefit from professional support in processing what they've been through or managing their emotional wellbeing. Reassure them that you want to encourage them however you can in prayer and fellowship, but do direct them towards professional help where that extra support might be needed. processing what they've been through or managing their emotional wellbeing. Reassure them that you want to encourage them however you can in prayer and fellowship, but do direct them towards professional help where that extra support might be needed.



REFLECT

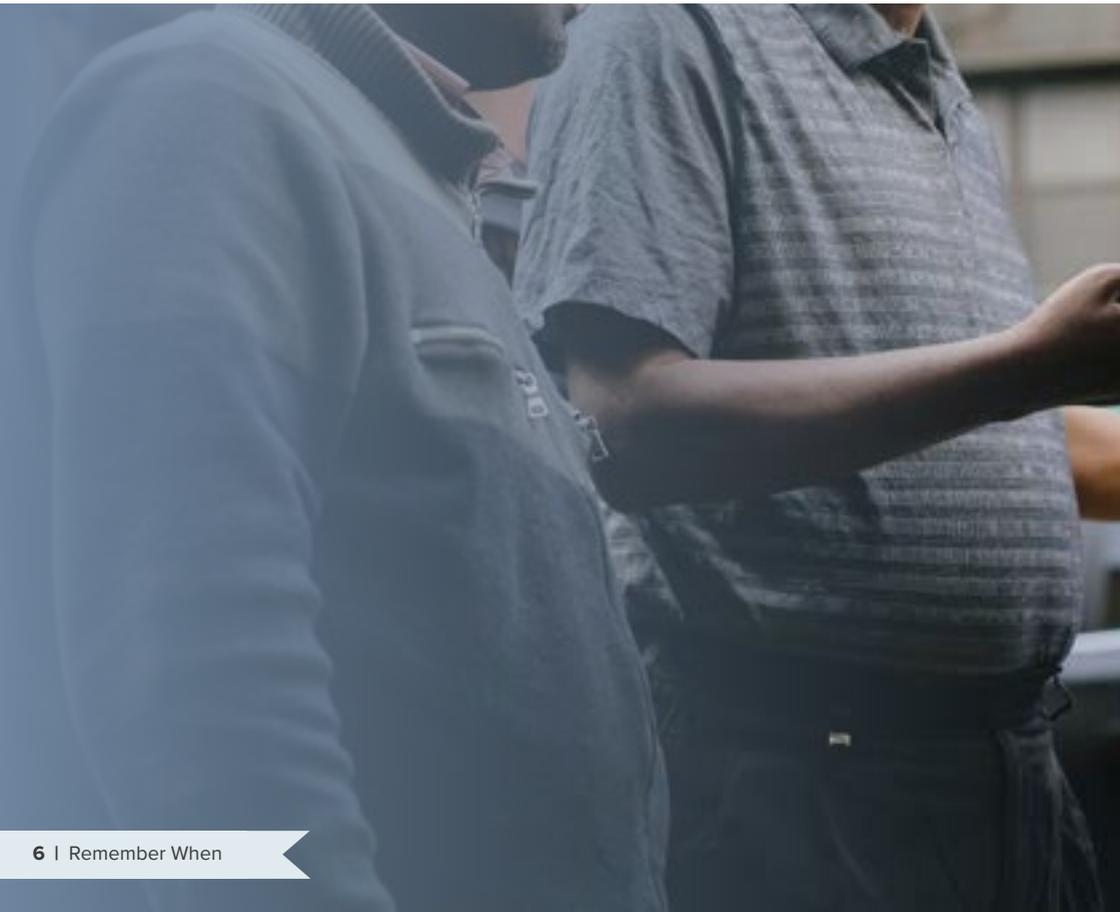
(20 MINS)

The wonderful thing about the story of Ruth and Naomi is that it doesn't end there. Instead, Ruth and Naomi go on to experience a deeper friendship with one another and a greater understanding of God's faithfulness. God guides them in a new season, meeting Boaz, Ruth's second husband, and regaining the stability they previously lost.

- Was there a moment in the pandemic when you lost sight of God's plan for your life? How did you react and what helped you keep going?
- Are there things that still cause you pain from the pandemic, even as we move into a new season?
- In the past, when you've experienced pain, grief or disappointment, how did God help you work through that? What can you learn from those experiences that gives you hope for healing from any current pain?
- What are the signs of growth or blessing that you've noticed in yourself as a result of lockdown and what have you learnt about yourself?
- What was the best thing that came out of your lockdown learning or experience?

WATCH | VIDEO - LAMENT | EAUK.ORG/LAMENT

(3 MINS)



REFLECT

(20 MINS)

Ask the group:

- As Phil Knox described in the Lament spoken word, our society has experienced huge change throughout the pandemic, from toilet roll shortages to furlough and the 'miracle vaccine'. How do you feel your community has changed as a result of what we've been through?
- Thinking of your friends, family, neighbours and colleagues, do you feel they would have related to the line "I have been deprived of peace"? Where do you think they looked for peace and comfort in lockdown?
- Did you experience a greater openness to the gospel amongst your non-Christian friends during the pandemic? If you have any stories of sharing faith with friends, take time to share them as a group.

#REMEMBERWHEN

(15 MINS)

Invite each person in the group to do the following activity individually: take a few minutes to visualise one specific moment from the pandemic where you remember when God felt close to you or you saw Him answer a prayer. What happened? How did it make you feel? What was the impact it had on how you viewed your situation? What did it teach you about God or yourself? Try to write down as much as you can recall from that **#RememberWhen** moment.

This is just one example of the multiple stories we each have of God at work in our lives, and when we share them with others who don't yet know Jesus, the impact could be huge.

SUMMARY

While all of us have had different experiences of lockdown, when we look back we can see that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and He never left us. He can carry any burden and longs to help us process what we've been through.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we will also have many opportunities to share our experience of God's faithfulness, and those stories could be just the encouragement our friends, colleagues and relatives need to seek Him out for themselves.

PRAY

Encourage your group to spend some time bringing everything you've talked about before God in prayer. For those who are still struggling to find stability after the pandemic, ask God for healing, peace and comfort. For those who have experienced loss, ask God to walk with them in their grief. And for those who feel they fared well during lockdown, ask that God would work through them to comfort and encourage those still struggling. For all of us, let's thank God for His faithfulness in walking with us every step of the way, and ask for His strength to speak boldly about Him with others.

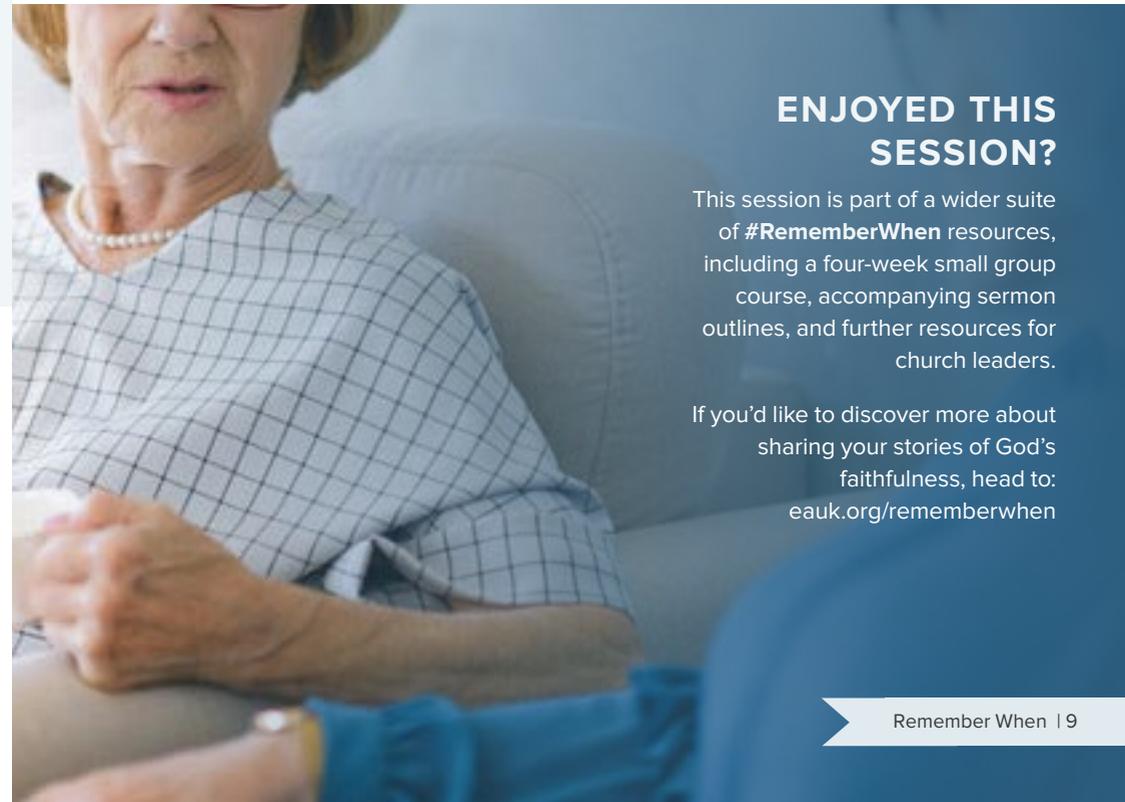
ACT

Suggest that your group members each find one non-Christian with whom they can share their **#RememberWhen** moment from lockdown. Encourage them to be honest about the challenges and pain they may have been through, but ultimately to witness to the faithfulness of God in all seasons.

ENJOYED THIS SESSION?

This session is part of a wider suite of **#RememberWhen** resources, including a four-week small group course, accompanying sermon outlines, and further resources for church leaders.

If you'd like to discover more about sharing your stories of God's faithfulness, head to: eauk.org/rememberwhen





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