
A Note about Using *Impact*

Impact aims to encourage members of small groups to support one another in engaging in practical action as Christian disciples in the Church and in the wider world. The material has been produced by Rev. Dr. Robert Foster, the Nottingham & Derby Methodist District's Discipleship and Vocations officer and Superintendent of the Derbyshire Dales Methodist Circuit.

It is hoped that *Impact* groups will be just one part of a range of a Church or Circuit's discipleship development groups. Committing to the kind of action suggested in this booklet will need to be thought about carefully in order to ensure a positive effect on group members and their communities. *Impact* group members may sometimes need to undertake appropriate training (e.g. for visiting) and should comply with Safeguarding procedures.

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Active Christian Discipleship

Committed to Christ
Growing in Faith
Changing the World

Ideas for Making an Impact



The **Methodist Church** 
Nottingham and Derby District

Making an *Impact*

This booklet is a resource for leaders of *Impact* groups. It contains a number of ideas for the 'receiving' aspect of *Impact* group meetings which are intended to help group leaders to decide, with their groups, upon areas of focus which should lead to the group's members committing to taking specific action between the group's meetings. The ideas are grouped as follows:

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Groups may wish to commit to short-term, medium-term and long-term projects in parallel and the hope is that as the members of *Impact* groups grow in their discipleship together they will decide upon their own areas of focus and will even offer their own areas of focus and associated resources to other *Impact* groups. May God bless you as you seek to serve him together.

Robert Foster

L4) Visiting

Making an impact as Christian disciples by arranging to visit an individual, or a group of people, with particular needs.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

- Matthew 8:14-15 (Jesus goes to Peter's house)
- Matthew 9:18-19 (Jesus at the Synagogue leader's house)
- Matthew 25:35-37 ("... I was in prison and you came ...")
- Luke 19:1-10 (Zacchaeus the tax collector)
- Acts 21:8-10 (staying at Philip's house)

Unpacking the Theme

With all of the demands of life, it can be hard to find time to catch up with friends and family, let alone to visit people we know less well. And yet, spending time with people may serve a number of purposes including: establishing or renewing a friendship; enabling people to catch up on news; helping people to feel valued; talking about faith and life; connecting with God through prayer.

The Bible readings may help in understanding how visiting can be of help in certain situations and in stimulating discussion about the reasons for visiting people and the difference between one-off and regular visits. *Impact* groups might wish to make a long-term commitment to visiting in a particular place (e.g. a care home or a prison), to visiting a particular group of people (e.g. those who are housebound, or have been bereaved), or to each find people or places to visit. Such a commitment is likely to involve working with an overseeing body (e.g. a Church Council, Cruse Bereavement Care or The National Association of Official Prison Visitors) and may also require some specific training.

L3) Sponsoring

Making an impact as Christian disciples by using sponsoring to respond to an identified need and to make a difference in a particular situation.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Ruth 2:1-13 (Ruth meets Boaz in the cornfield)

Luke 10:25-37 (The parable of the good Samaritan)

Luke 21:1-3 (The widow's offering)

Unpacking the Theme

There are many different ways to support people living in adverse conditions and to help them to grow and thrive. Sometimes, hands-on involvement is possible and is helpful, but when people live far away the only option is sometimes to raise or give money in order that local people can respond to their needs. Often, where needs are identified, what is needed is a long-term commitment, rather than a quick-fix approach. Money that is used wisely and on a long-term basis can pay for a child to be educated, or can change things in order that families reliant on loans or middle-men can become self-sufficient and can begin to improve their own circumstances and those of others around them.

The Bible readings may help in understanding how people can support other people and what sponsoring might entail. *Impact* groups might wish to develop a way of sponsoring that could involve different types of long-term commitment. One such commitment might be to find a way of sponsoring a child's education until they reach the age of 18. Another commitment might be to organise, train for, or enter a sponsorship event designed to facilitate long-term support in a particular situation.

Making a short-term *Impact*

In some ways, it can seem relatively easy to make an impact through our discipleship in the short-term. Equally, though, it can be relatively easy to make short-term decisions that do not have as positive an impact as they might. These ideas for making a short-term impact are designed both to enable *Impact* groups to feel that they can make a difference to the wider world as disciples, but also to help *Impact* groups to begin to think about what they might do together in the medium-term and long-term.

S1) Buying

Making an impact by considering how our Christian discipleship affects the decisions that we make whenever we buy things.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Isaiah 55:1-2 (Invitation to the thirsty)

Isaiah 58:9b-11 ("If you spend yourselves ...")

Matthew 21:11-13 (Jesus at the Temple)

Mark 6:30-34 (Jesus feeds the five thousand)

Unpacking the Theme

Each of us is likely to have a certain amount of money that we may decide how to spend. Whether our money is spent on essentials or extras, the way in which we spend it can have an impact on other people. The Bible readings may help in thinking about God's attitude towards providing for us and our attitude to using money. As a short-term commitment (that may well grow), *Impact* group members could consider buying The Big Issue, or Fairtrade, FSC, etc. to help people or contribute to sustainability.

S2) Collecting

Making an impact as Christian disciples by engaging in activities to collect for charities or good causes.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

- Deuteronomy 15:4-8, 11 (How to treat the poor)
- Proverbs 14:31 (Kindness and oppression)
- Isaiah 58:68 (True fasting)
- Amos 8:4-7 (The Lord remembers)
- Luke 4:18-19 (The year of the Lord's favour)
- Luke 11:37-40 (Woe on the Pharisees)
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (The collection for the Lord's people)

Unpacking the Theme

There is a bewildering array of charities operating in our country and in the wider world. Some of these charities operate locally, perhaps with a small groups of people who have a common need. Other charities operate nationally or internationally, responding to diverse needs and circumstances as best they can and often doing so by working with local partners.

Much of this charitable work will be planned to span many months or years because needs have been identified that require such a response. Other charitable work happens in response to crises such as hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, outbreaks of diseases and individual needs related to health, poverty or abuse.

The Bible readings may help in thinking about people in need and how we might respond. *Impact* groups could consider a short-term commitment to help with fundraising - such as helping with local Christian Aid Week collections or organising an event or sale in support of a particular charity.

L2) Helping

Making an impact as Christian disciples by identifying a group of people in need and initiating a project to respond to that need.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

- Matthew 8:14-17 (Jesus heals many)
- Matthew 15:21-28 (The faith of a Caananite woman)
- 1 Corinthians 13 (Love)

Unpacking the Theme

Individuals and small groups often have a sense of purpose or vision that leads to the emergence of large organisations with a particular purpose. Examples are: the YMCA (founded by George Williams, a worker in the London drapery trade, in 1844); the Salvation Army (founded by William Booth, a London minister, in 1865); Help for Heroes (founded by Bryn and Emma Parry in 2007). Such organisations usually start in a small way, perhaps with a specific project, but the people who begin the work can find that there are many more people who also need to be helped and the organisations can grow and develop beyond recognition in response to these needs.

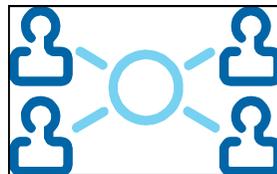
The Bible readings may help in understanding how Jesus' ministry grew in response to people's needs and how early Christians were encouraged to demonstrate Christian love. *Impact* groups might wish to develop a long-term project in response to a specific area of need that they identify; to do so, they may need to engage in research to identify a need, to raise funds, to secure the use of premises, or to recruit a groups of like-minded volunteers. Such a project may prove challenging and demanding, so planning ahead will be vital.

Making a Long-Term *Impact*

Making a long-term impact on the wider world as a group of present-day disciples of Jesus will involve committing together to engage in particular activities for a reasonable period of time - say more than 12 months. Such a commitment may require members of the group to think about changing their personal priorities for a given period of time. In doing so, the group as a whole will hopefully be able to see how their working together as disciples has made a real difference.

L1) Connecting

Making an impact as Christian disciples by developing links with other groups or with particular organisations.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

1 Corinthians 16:19-20
Philippians 1:1-6
Colossians 4:7-18

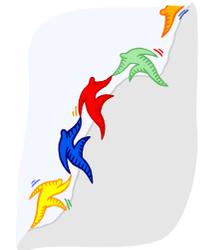
Unpacking the Theme

Social networks facilitated by technology play a key part in our society today and many people spend a lot of time putting information about themselves onto websites and looking at information about other people they know.

The Bible readings may help in understanding how people networked in the early Church and what a difference that made. *Impact* groups might wish to develop a long-term connection with a group or organisation in order to learn more about them and to gain a sense of how they live and work.

S3) Encouraging

Making an impact as Christian disciples by encouraging other people to develop and use their gifts and personal resources.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Mark 1:16-20 (Jesus calls his first disciples)
Acts 18:24-28 (Apollos and his encouragement)
Acts 20:1-2 (Paul encourages others)
Romans 12:3-8 (Humble service in the body of Christ)
2 Corinthians 13:11-14 (Final greetings)
1 Thessalonians 5:9-24 (Christian living)

Unpacking the Theme

Each is loved by God and special to God. As each one of us is also different, our paths in life will also be very different; we will all have many opportunities in life, yet we may not may the most of these and may not, therefore, reach our full potential.

Often, we are prevented from reaching our full potential because we feel discouraged. That discouragement may come as a result of us not feeling valued and it may also come as a result of people seeming to actively discourage us from using and developing the gifts that God has given to us.

The Bible readings may help in thinking about how to encourage one another. *Impact* groups could consider people and groups who have potential, but who are not achieving all that they might; how might short-term encouragement might make a difference to the lives of such individuals and groups? *Impact* groups could then decide to do particular things in order to try to encourage people.

S4) Smiling

Making an impact as Christian disciples by deliberately making the attempt to smile whenever we relate to other people.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Psalm 68:3-4 (Gladness and joy of the righteous)
Habakkuk 3:17-19 (I will rejoice in the Lord)
Romans 12:9-12 (Love in action)

Unpacking the Theme

John Donne famously wrote: “No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” This poem, written from a Christian perspective, is a reminder that human beings are all socially and spiritually interconnected.

As we spend time with other people, we cannot help having an effect on them: if we are prickly, other people may find us hard to relate to; if we are compassionate, other people may want to join us in caring; if we are sad, other people may find their mood changing to match ours in some way; if we are joyful, happy and laughing, other people may find that their spirits are lifted, if only for a brief time.

The Bible readings may help to highlight the sense of the joy that people of faith may experience. With all the challenges that life can throw at us, it might seem simplistic to suggest that we should always be happy. Yet, *Impact* groups might consider a short-term commitment to try to reflect the love and joy of God in their relationships with others in simple ways, such as consciously making the effort to smile, or to be positive and encouraging. In a world that can often seem hostile and uncaring, this might make quite a difference to people’s lives.

M4) Organising

Making an impact as Christian disciples by organizing an event or series of events that will benefit particular groups of people.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Matthew 25:31-46 (The sheep and the goats)
John 6:1-13 (Jesus feeds the five thousand)
Romans 12:13 (Share and practise hospitality)

Unpacking the Theme

There are many good things that could be done in communities around the world, but what often prevents this is that there are simply not enough people resources. The Church and many charitable organisations do manage to find volunteers who are willing to do things but in order for these volunteers to be able to make a difference to people’s lives they need to be able to find projects to get involved with.

The Bible readings may help to see something of priorities of Jesus and the early Church in terms of caring for people. *Impact* group members will live and work in certain communities and may have a sense of what could be organised for certain groups of people; they could together determine an event or series of events that might be organised in order to meet a need in a particular community and could then take the lead in organising the chosen event(s), recruiting sufficient volunteers and finding sufficient resources to make this achievable. Examples of events that might be organised include: a Christmas lunch for people who would be on their own on Christmas day; a concert in a housing complex for retired people; a trip to the seaside for families which cannot afford to go away for summer holidays.

M3) Improving

Making an impact as Christian disciples by working to improve things such as housing, amenities and local services.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Matthew 7:24-27 (The wise and foolish builders)

Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus forgives and heals a paralysed man)

Luke 8:4-8 (The parable of the sower)

Unpacking the Theme

People often say things like “you don’t need to reinvent the wheel” or “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”. Such sayings suggest that it is best to carry on doing things in the same way, yet is that always the case? Although the basic principle of the wheel is great, it is notable that, without the refinement of the wheel with pneumatic tyres and the continuing development of tyre technology, it would not be possible for vehicles to perform as they currently do.

The Bible readings may help in understanding spiritual matters, but they can also help in understanding practical matters such as good practice in building, good practice in farming and the importance of “thinking outside of the box”, such as when the paralysed man was lowered through the roof. Improving things can be a way of enhancing performance and that can ultimately enhance people’s potential and quality of life. *Impact* groups could consider a medium-term commitment to improving a small group of people’s potential and/or quality of life. Such a commitment would mean identifying something that is in need of improvement - such as a dangerous road crossing - and then taking appropriate action to secure that improvement.

S5) Speaking

Making an impact as Christian disciples by choosing our words carefully whenever we relate to other people in conversation.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

Psalms 37:30-31 (The mouths of the righteous)

James 3:1-12 (Taming the tongue)

1 Peter 3:8-10 (Christian living and speech)

Unpacking the Theme

Human beings are able to communicate in amazing ways, conveying subtle and not-so-subtle meanings and concepts to one another with numerous technologies and across vast distances. As with many things, communication can be used in constructive ways and in destructive ways. Social media, in particular, seem to get people into trouble quite often as celebrities and employees seem to disengage their brains before typing quite scathing comments about situations and people.

Even though there are so many ways to communicate, conversation still plays a key part in human relationships and it is a true today as it ever was that once something has been said it can’t be unsaid.

The Bible readings may help in thinking about the way in which people of faith might choose to communicate, as well as the damaging effect that speech - and all forms of communication - can have on other people. *Impact* groups might consider a short-term commitment to try to communicate in encouraging and affirming ways. This may be hard to do where there is a culture of moaning and being critical, yet in such places it may also have quite a profound effect.

Making a Medium-Term *Impact*

Making a medium-term impact on the wider world as a group of present-day disciples of Jesus will involve committing together to engage in particular activities for a reasonable period of time - say 3 to 12 months. Such a commitment may require members of the group to think about changing their personal priorities for a while. The group as a whole will hopefully be able to see how their working together as disciples has made a real difference.

M1) Campaigning

Making an impact as Christian disciples by campaigning about particular issues - whether to change things or not.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

- Micah 6:6-8 (What the Lord requires)
- Matthew 12:1-14 (Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath)
- Romans 12:1-2 (A living sacrifice)

Unpacking the Theme

In choosing to follow Jesus, people have often found that they do not agree with the way things are done in wider society. Just as Jesus himself challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees about their way of living, so we may also find that we disagree with what is happening in the Church or in the wider world.

The Bible readings may help in thinking about the priorities for people of faith. *Impact* groups might wish to commit to medium-term engagement with an existing campaign - e.g. trade justice, or human rights - or perhaps to start a new campaign on a local issue of justice.

M2) Conserving

Making an impact as Christian disciples by working to protect and/or preserve species, their natural habitats and the environment.



Hearing the Scriptures

The following Bible readings may be helpful:

- Genesis 1:26-31 (The beginning)
- Exodus 23:10-11 (A Sabbath for the fields)
- Isaiah 24:4-5 (The effects of pollution)

Unpacking the Theme

On its US website, the World Wildlife Fund outlines a number of threats to the environment - factors that favour or allow damaging or unsustainable activities. These threats include climate change, deforestation, pollution, soil erosion and degradation. On its UK website (www.wwf.org.uk), the World Wildlife Fund suggests that, in the UK, we are consuming three times our fair share of the planet's natural resources, saying that there will be severe consequences for both people and nature unless we humans change the way we live.

The Bible readings may help in thinking about the way in which people of faith might choose to be stewards of the world's resources. *Impact* groups might consider a medium-term commitment to raising people's awareness of the environmental damage that is occurring, as well as encouraging people to take action to change the way that they are living. Choices that are made in relation to food, housing, transport and investment can all have adverse effects on the environment. Encouraging people to change their decision-making priorities through a medium-term project may have a longer-term impact as people form habits that will help to conserve and sustain the environment.