

A hand-drawn banner with the text "Known & Loved" in a stylized font. The ampersand is a circle with a dot. There is a heart on the left and a smaller heart on the right. The banner is drawn with a simple black outline.

# Known & Loved

**Six small group sessions to prepare you to show and tell others that they are known and loved by God**

Written by Chris Duffett

The logo for "the light project" features the text "the light project" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a dark, irregular background. Below it, the tagline "actively demonstrating the christian message" is written in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font.

the  
light  
project

actively demonstrating  
the christian message



**Welcome to Known and Loved. Over the next six sessions we will look at some of the stories from the book of Acts. Each story relates something of the adventure that the first friends of Jesus engaged in. As we study how the emerging first century Church worked out what it meant to show and tell the good news of Jesus, we shall apply what they did to our own community.**

These sessions are designed to prepare you within a small group to do something that will show the people around you that they are known and loved by God. You may decide to take 6 weeks do work through them, or it could be a shorter or longer time, it's up to you! However you choose to work through these sessions there is one question that will bubble away in your small group study and discussion:

**Jesus, how may we love our community in such a way that it shows what you are like?'**

We start in Acts chapter 8 verse 1, around seven years after it is thought that Jesus uttered those well known words in Acts chapter 1 verse 8.

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

You may have been a Christian for many years and wondered how you may proactively share your faith with those around you, but have lacked the courage to speak of the good news of Jesus. If so, then you are in good company. After Jesus instructed His disciples to go, they stayed! It was only when persecution of the Church started that the disciples in Jerusalem were scattered. Just as well really, otherwise the best news this world has ever been graced with would have remained a secret in a small city for a select few!

Before we start on these sessions, it's important to note that this isn't a resource that will tell you what to believe or what to do. Rather, from each story we shall investigate what the scriptures are teaching us today and we shall respond accordingly.

Enjoy the adventure!

## How to use this booklet:

- 1) **Small groups**, gathered ideally in a public space like a great pub, coffee shop or café. Gather with people who are part of your home group, life group, missional groups or whatever you call them! Ideally, around 10 people are a good number.
- 2) **Six sessions with six challenges** to prepare you to do something. Agree to meet up to six times and explore the six challenges contained in this booklet. This will culminate with the group planning how they may show those around them that they are known and loved.
- 3) **Be prepared** how you may do something. Take time to listen and don't be scared to be ready to share your ideas in the group.

Each time the group meets, you work through the following four steps:

### Read/ Reflect/ Respond/ Review

1. **Read/** Read the Scriptures a few times. Look out for 'shockers' and 'blockers.' **Shocker** - something that stands out from the passage, something that resonates with you - maybe a key word or phrase. **Blocker** - something that you are not sure about or have questions you would like to ask in the group.
  2. **Reflect/** Take time as a group to talk about the passage and what God might be saying to you through it. Go round the group and discuss your shockers and blockers
  3. **Respond/** Towards the end of your session read the challenges for the week. Please use or adapt them as you would like to or as a group come up with your own one!
  4. **Review/** Each time you meet, commit the first part of your time together to review your experience of the challenges.
- At the end of the 6 sessions should have an idea of what you will do as a small group to let others know that they are known and loved.**



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# Session One:

## Can our community be loved?

This introduction session sets out the vision for this resource: **to do something that let's others know they are known and loved. Our Bible reading reveals that a whole city was filled with joy when it saw love in action through Philip. In this session you may want to consider what signs brought that joy and begin to dream of what you may do so that your community may also be filled with joyfulness!**

It is not a mistake that we live where we do. Please take time for each group member to share their 2 minute story of why they live or have a connection with the community you are in. Could it be that it is for 'such a time as this?'



### Read/ Acts 8.1-8

And Saul approved of their killing him.

#### The church persecuted and scattered

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

#### Philip in Samaria

<sup>4</sup> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup> When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup> For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city.

### Reflect/

- What are the **'shockers'** or **'blockers'** for you in this passage?
- What brought great joy in the city?
- In Acts 6 we read that Philip was one of the 7 people who were set apart in a role as Deacon. Today's reading shows him doing quite a different role; do you think you have the gifts to share the news of Jesus?



### Respond/

- 1) This week write down the gifts you believe God has given you as a Christian. This is a humbling thing to do and it may be something you would prefer to keep to yourself. However, if you feel able, share your 'gift list' next week with the group.
- 2) Write down what your dream for your community is. What kind of village/town/city would you like to see in the future?
- 3) Coffee break: Take 20mins this week to grab a coffee in your community and look around you. Ask two questions as you go: Jesus, where are you already at work? Is there someone around me who is hurting?

Use this space to record your gift list and any notes.



# Session Two:

## Good news for each person

**This study considers the people in the whole town. Thinking of a whole town can make it hard to see the wood through the tress, or rather the precious individuals amongst the crowds! Many Christians can become overwhelmed and disenabled to reach out with the thought of so many people.**

How will you play your part in reaching the thousands living in your community? Philip went to one man and shared good news in a way that will encourage us all to see our neighbourhood made up of individuals known and loved by God. The man Philip shared good news with became the very first non-Jewish Christian.

### Read/ Acts 8.26-40

#### Philip and the Ethiopian

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'

<sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian[a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians'). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup> The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.' <sup>30</sup> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

<sup>31</sup> 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.'

<sup>33</sup> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.'<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

<sup>36</sup> As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?' [c] <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him.

<sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

<sup>40</sup> Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

### Reflect/

- What are the 'shockers' or 'blockers' for you in this passage?
- How does it make you feel that the first non-Jewish Christian was a involved in the sex industry? (The Greek for Eunuch means 'keeper of the beds'.) He would have also looked partly like a woman.
- What kind of attitudes do we hold towards people who are different to us? Do we believe there are any people who are 'beyond the pale' of Church?

### Respond/

1. *How could we, like Philip, stop for one person amongst the crowds? Consider how you may connect with one person at work or within your community that brings help to them.*
2. *Buy a coffee for someone this week to bless them!*
3. *How could you as a group consider going to people who are different to you as part of your action after the 6 week study?*

**Use this space to record any notes.**

# Session Three: Having a Heart for our neighbourhood

**This week is about our availability as we examine our hearts and ask whether we believe or not that God would want to speak to us and use us to bring good news to those around us.**

Our reading looks at what it took for Ananias to go to a terrorist and murderer with the gospel. How may we learn from Ananias in our relationship with God and our willingness to go to people around us with His love?

Will we dare to say today 'here I am God, use me!' How can you listen to God today as a small group to be inspired with ideas and a heart to reach out to those around us who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus?

## Read/ Acts 9.10-19

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'

'Yes, Lord,' he answered.

11 The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.<sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'

13 'Lord,' Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.'

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.<sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul,

he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'<sup>18</sup> Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised,<sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

## Reflect/

- What are the '**shockers**' or '**blockers**' for you in this passage?
- If you were in Ananias' shoes, what would have been the first words you would have said to Saul?
- What stops us going to share good news with those around us?
- What do you think at this stage that God may be speaking to the group about how they may let those around them know that they are known and loved by God?

## Respond/

1. Do you believe that God can speak to you? Spend some time this week intentionally being still to listen out for what God may say to you. Make a note of what you hear/feel/or read.
2. Ask a friend who isn't a Christian what he or she thinks the Church could do to show the love of God in your area.
3. If you feel very brave, ask God for a word of encouragement for you to share with someone this week. You may want to write it in a card simply saying, 'I think that God may want you to know that...'

Use this space to record any notes.

# Session Four: What could God do in your community?

This session focuses on prayer and will include a prayer walk or prayer drive in small groups or pairs around the neighbourhood.

We serve a God who performs miracles and Peter was obedient to ask God for the impossible. This brought incredible results!

Take time this week in your small group to pray for your community and dream of a place where God shows in power what he is like. Take heart with this mystery:

## When we pray, God works.

## Read/ Acts 9.32-43

### Aeneas and Dorcas

<sup>32</sup> As Peter travelled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralysed and had been bedridden for eight years. <sup>34</sup> 'Aeneas,' Peter said to him, 'Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.' Immediately Aeneas got up. <sup>35</sup> All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became ill and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, 'Please come at once!'

<sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood round him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

<sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning towards the dead woman, he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

## Reflect/

- What are the 'shockers' or 'blockers' for you in this passage?
- Take a good 20 to 30 minutes praying walking or prayer driving in your community.

The best way to do this is in pairs or small groups of 3 or 4. As you walk, pray quietly or out loud for God to do what God will do in your village, town or city!

## Respond/

1. This week if you are able to and it is near enough, take one day to walk to work or to the school instead of taking the car or public transport. Pray as you walk!
2. Trusting that prayer actually works, offer to pray for someone this week who you wouldn't usually offer prayer to. What happened?
3. How are the ideas for what you will do shaping? As you prayer walk this week ask God to reveal his ideas and plans for you and the group. What do you feel that God is saying?

Use this space to record any notes.

# Session Five: Doing a new thing!

In this session we consider what it means to do something new in letting others know the good news of Jesus and what He has done for the people around us.

Peter saw the birth of the Gentile church, but had to be willing to get well out of his comfort zone of the familiar to do something new.

## Read/ Acts 10.19-30

<sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three[a] men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'

<sup>21</sup> Peter went down and said to the men, 'I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?'

<sup>22</sup> The men replied, 'We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.'

<sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

### Peter at Cornelius' house

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was

expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up. 'Stand up,' he said, 'I am only a man myself.'

<sup>27</sup> While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup> He said to them: 'You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?'

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered: 'Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me.

## Reflect/

What are the '**shockers**' or '**blockers**' for you in this passage?

Peter went to people he would have considered 'unclean.' Culturally, who are the people that you would least likely spend time with? Why?

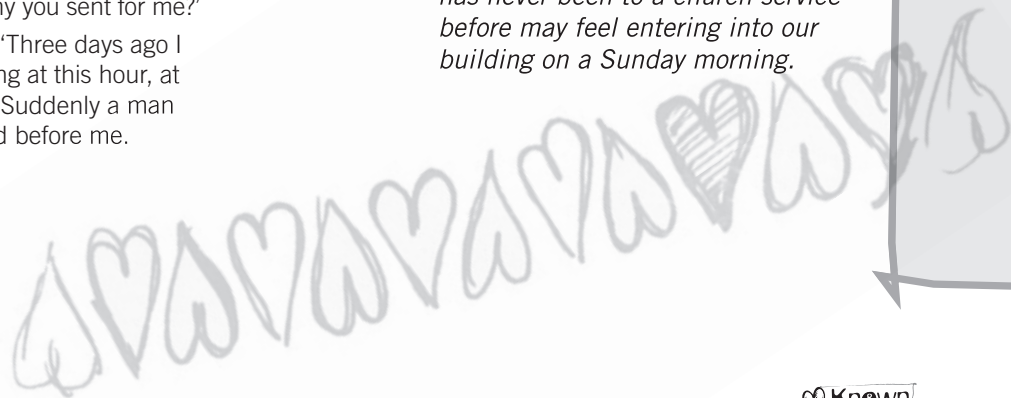
Like Peter, is God asking you to reach out to a group who make you feel uncomfortable?

Where do people in your neighbourhood gather? When is the next car boot sale, mind, body and spirit fayre or school fete? How may you serve and show good news in new areas?

## Respond/

1. Go to an unfamiliar place:  
*It could be to go and place a £2 bet or choose any other place you wouldn't usually choose to go to.*
2. Reflect on your experience and make some notes for next week with the group. How did you feel?  
*Did you know what to do?  
Did anyone help you?*
3. Think about how someone who has never been to a church service before may feel entering into our building on a Sunday morning.

Use this space to record any notes.



# Session Six:

## What will you do to show others that they are known and loved?

**The final session! Today you will decide what it is that you will actually do as a small group!**

Considering the Church in Antioch and having confidence that the Lord's hand is also with us, what is it that you may do amongst the people in your locality? How will people know that what you are doing is because of the message and good news of Jesus?

### Read/ Acts 11.19-30

#### The church in Antioch

<sup>19</sup> Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.

<sup>20</sup> Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

<sup>24</sup> He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup> and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

<sup>27</sup> During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

<sup>28</sup> One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

<sup>29</sup> The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. <sup>30</sup> This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

### Reflect/

What are the 'shockers' or 'blockers' for you in this passage?

Take time this week to plan practically what it is that you will do. Allocate roles and put the dates of your activity in the diary. You may need to meet up again and pray for your initiative.

**Questions to consider:** How will you advertise your event/ or outreach? In what ways will people know what you are doing is because of your faith? How will you follow up those you have met? Is there a course or another event that you can invite those who you meet to?

### Respond/

1. *Pray, pray, pray! You and your small group are about to engage in something new that will mean people get to hear and see the good news of Jesus. This is a spiritual activity that needs prayer!*
2. *Remember, God wants to use you to further His Kingdom every day and not just over the set activity or outreach you do. How may you show good news on the run up to your event or outreach?*

Use this space to record any notes.

**Conclusion:  
Keep going!**



# The six sessions are over...

but there's so much more to be done.

I hope you have experienced something new through these sessions. If you were able to meet in public while planning for what you will do, then may I encourage you to keep on doing so? You see, most people in the UK simply do not have a clue about what you and I know so well.

They have yet to encounter the good news of Jesus and by taking the bible out of the pew and into the pub, or out from the church into the café we will give people around us that precious opportunity to ask us questions and to eavesdrop. Questions like, 'excuse me, what is that book you are reading?' Or, 'What are you lot doing?!' When small groups dare to meet in public some people have joined them! That's the beauty of being amongst people who are not Christians when we meet and study God's word together. Conversations start and people have questions!

Let me encourage you to keep on going with your ideas from 'known and loved.' I reckon we have a life-time adventure of faith sharing before us, we need to keep going. Why? People desperately need what we have got. The task of letting others in on the gospel 'secret' is vast and it will take all of us to fulfil it. Will you play your part?

Keep on loving those around you, so much so that you reveal the best news ever!

**Chris Duffett**

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Chris Duffett go to:  
[www.chrisduffett.com/writing](http://www.chrisduffett.com/writing)



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