

*Deena, come and join me here. We've heard just a little bit about what might attract someone to the life of the church as a family. Let's think a little bit more about the actual invitation from the Lord Jesus, the one that we used in our response, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and overburdened.' Deena, can you tell us a bit about how you experience the invitation of the gospel?*

I was going on holiday and we were at the airport and the seats on the aeroplane were in threes and there were four of us. Me being me said, Right, I will sit on my own, go on. I sat next to this elderly couple and they asked me a little bit about my life. They asked me about my family. I had told them that my daughter had been in a nasty accident and broken her back. I used the phrase, and I don't quite know why I did, but the Lord knows, I said, "There by the grace of God, go I." They grabbed my hand and said, "We're Christians." I said, I don't understand what a Christian is, really. We've lived next door to some Christians who went backwards and forwards to church each Sunday. We were kept busy doing jobs helping other people, but not involved going backwards and forwards to church (I hasten to add now my neighbours maybe say, "Gosh, there she is, going backwards and forwards to church.")

They asked me 'Could they send me a little book about who is Jesus?' I gave them my address quite naively and innocently and when I got home, I found this little book through the door, 'Who is Jesus?' I recognised the logo as being the logo that was outside the Minster, the Alpha course logo. I thought, Well, do you know, I'm going to go along and just see what this Alpha course is all about. I knew nobody in the Minster and I just came along, I was welcomed. I don't know again, my sister, who isn't religious, had given me this CD about the top favourite hymns, which I seemed to be playing in the car over and over again. The one 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive my foolish ways' - I thought, Gosh, I can't forgive my foolish ways because I'd had quite a full, lively life. But there were things I wanted to repent and this [religion] made me a channel of your love and your peace. I thought, Well, do you know that resonates with me, certainly how I felt at that time, and this repentance and being able to move on.

Now God, I felt, has held me at very significant times in my life. I've likened myself to a flower on a long stem with the sepals being God holding me - at times when I sadly lost my daughter. Then I realised there was... I've done the alpha course, but then I really wanted to glean some more information, and I actually started listening to sermons. I'd trained as a teacher at St. John's College. I used to occasionally, if I got up in time, would go possibly to the chapel, much to the amusement of a lot of my friends, possibly in the clothes that I'd worn the night before I'd get up and go to chapel. I'd been christened and confirmed before I got married - but it didn't resonate at all with me - just didn't click.

I had, like James, very very limited religious knowledge. My father was Jewish. My mother was Church of England, and religion was never, never discussed at home. I certainly wasn't brought up in the Jewish faith. I later learned, well, I realised that my father had actually become a Christian. For their 50th wedding anniversary they wanted to go up to Ripon Cathedral and renew their vows. Now, I didn't really realise how significant faith must have been in their life to have actually done that - they didn't want any other celebration other than to privately renew their vows. Then when I came to church and all this about the church family, I thought that was all a bit strange. But you know, we have got a church family, a very, very loving church family. I've spent three quarters of my life without faith and it's only latterly that I have really experienced faith. I can honestly say that I thank the Lord for all the situations, the tasks, the

meeting of different people, helping people, and being able to serve. Faith has actually fulfilled my life. It's given this extra dimension and meaning and I really do thank the Lord.