

Makes You Wonder

Series 2: Your Story



*Exercises in helping a friend
to see the spiritual stuff
By Ian Robinson*

Your Story is dedicated to
Peter and Sue Kaldor
friends, supporters,
adventurers, generous, creative
compassionate leaders.

YOUR STORY



Where can we see God at work in others' lives? How can we interpret that to help them to see how BIG God is? What is happening around them that bears the fingerprints of God?

Some voices speak of a pattern or purpose emerging in their life. They have a sneaking suspicion that they are here for a reason. For

many people, it is more than a suspicion. They have been met by a happening from heaven, called an "epiphany" or possibly "a wake up call". But what is real here? Some epiphanies may be just an overheated imagination, some of it superstitious, without a shred of evidence. Can we understand these spiritual experiences?

In this second series of *Makes You Wonder*, we will look away from church, philosophy and theology in order to focus on the everyday world around us. We will look at some of the experiences that are common ground in human spirituality. What are the clues to show that God has been there? What might it mean as we journey in our life? We will also face a few influences that can mislead us. Remember this is just one of four stories that we are called to share, so don't miss it.

Topics in this series:

1. God is with You
2. Mapping My Life
3. Hearing You
4. The Smell of God
5. Imago
6. Stand Still
7. Epiphanies
8. The Parent Trap
9. Nitpick
10. Meditations

In each topic, your leader's notes are written out in full. There is a separate booklet of participants' pages if you wish to use them. Some other pages in this book might also be used. Will you do this before, during, or after? – your choice.



1. GOD IS WITH YOU

GOAL

To show how, in everyone's life-story, there are signs of God's presence and Grace.

INTRODUCTION

God is caring for people, and calling for people to connect. His rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. (Jas 1:17, Matt 5.45) Being made in God's image, all people experience much of His grace, but often unknowingly. This exercise increases awareness of this Grace.

KEY QUESTION

Let us begin by looking into our own experience. Think of the time before you were an adult or committed Christian. (A childhood faith is tested by life.)

WHAT WAS YOUR EARLIEST AWARENESS OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE?

OTHER QUESTIONS TO TRY NEXT TIME

What was the 'hook' in the gospel that drew you to search?

What has been one of the most awesome moments in your life?

When are you most aware that you are here on earth for a purpose?

What gives you hope to go on living?

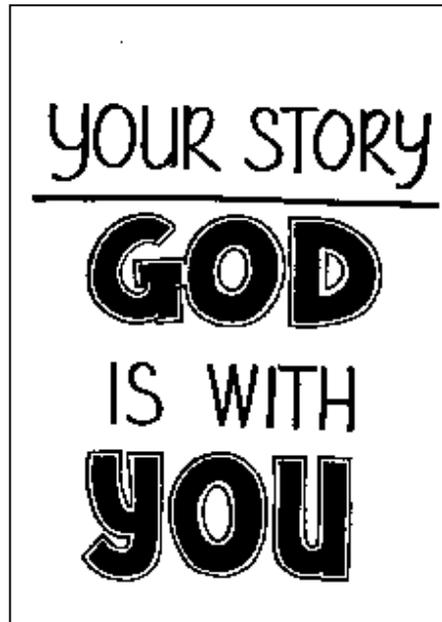
Have you ever had an inexplicable or powerful spiritual experience? What was it

(Leader will tell their own story first by way of example.)

Groups of three, talk for one minute each, then talk it over together for a few minutes.

STEP TWO ALL TOGETHER

List on the board the "hooks" in everyone's stories. Sometimes one of the "other questions to try" also needs to be asked, to produce a wider range of responses.





PRESENCE FRAME:

Categorise the answers onto the whiteboard under these categories:

- **God** acting directly
- **Nature** speaking of a Creator.
- Particular **circumstances** pushed a person to seek
- Other **persons** have influenced us

STEP THREE DISCUSSION

- As a Christian, I believe these “experiences” are God’s invitations to know him better.
- Some evil is “awesome” also, that is why most people can’t scream when a burglar comes in. That is why evil characters in fiction are often more “interesting” than good ones.
- Our findings are an expression of the Christian doctrines of Creation and the work of the Holy Spirit in PREVENIENT GRACE or COMMON GRACE (as distinct from SAVING GRACE). If these terms mean nothing you may be glad to read up on them first.
- It shows us again how vitally important are some aspects of Christian lifestyle eg. listening, hospitality, community.
- How difficult was it for to talk about these things? Is it because we are shy or because these things are precious?
- What have you learned or noticed about talking sensitively with another? People with this ‘shyness’ appreciate our respect and safety and help in interpreting their experiences, not grabbing at their precious thoughts.

CONCLUSION

Within our experiences, God has many ways to break into our awareness, but we tend to take them for granted.