

# Suggestions for How to Use the “Glimpses of God” CD



Philip and Caroline Luff ran a five-week study group this year, using the CD by students of Westcott House, Glimpses of God. The group listened to two reflections each time they met, and discussed them.

"It has been one of the best courses we've had for a long time... We felt that the Church's future will be in the hands of people who have a rapport with the divine and are thinking, sensitive and able to share their thoughts and experiences most generously, so that we have all had glimpses of God through their meditations."

Caroline Luff has been kind enough to write up some notes on what they did each week - you may find this a helpful outline for your own small groups!

## Moments of Change:

[Track 13: Wait for the Lord](#)

[Track 18: Sanctus Beside John's Coffin](#)

Both these contributors speak of reaching moments of change when their perception has shifted through God reaching them in unexpected moments or unexpected places. How easy do you find it to let yourself be touched by God, to wait for the Lord who may then catch you unawares? Can you let yourself be 'overtaken' by God, or your prayer 'enabled by the Holy Spirit'?

## Being in role:

[Track 5: Reaching Out](#)

[Track 9: The Copyist](#)

Do you feel confined by the roles you occupy - as a parent, at work or as a Christian? Can you think of times in your life when you have taken a risk and allowed yourself to be touched by a situation where the outcome was unknown?

Can you think of activities when you find yourself 'switched on' to another part of yourself that you had not previously been aware of? Are there different ways in which you can be you? If so, how is God working in those different ways?

## **Loss and grief:**

[Track 18: Sanctus Beside John's Coffin](#)

[Track 20: Grief and Joy](#)

Where does each of these speakers find hope in their experiences of loss and grief? Thinking of your own experiences of loss, can you see the 'new beginnings' that they might contain? What feelings do these accounts, and the music that follows each, provoke in you?

## **The Bible:**

[Track 11: Search Me, O God, and Know Me](#)

Here Psalm 139 is seen as describing the contributor's own situation yet it also leads her to put her own experiences in a different 'frame'; one where she is known and cared for by an intimate God. Do the Psalmists describe their emotions and relationships with God in a way which echoes your own? How might your sense of story find room for expression in the Bible?

## **Feelings of inadequacy:**

[Track 3: Come and have breakfast](#)

How do you understand and deal with experiences and feelings of failure and inadequacy - those times when you find yourself a 'fishless fisher'?

What does God's offer of reconciliation mean to you?

How is God calling you to respond to the offer of 'breakfast living'?

## Small Group Notes on *Glimpses of God*.

### **Come and Have Breakfast**

We reflected on the Lake of Galilee in Jesus' ministry and I showed some slides.

We read and discussed John 21 and questioned whether Jesus saw the Lake as specially significant for his mission or whether it was just part of the environment and a means of travel.

Do we see the Lake as a parable of our lives and encounters with God?

Of course, we also responded to the particular points of the meditation – betrayal, acceptance, repentance, the nature of the event – both homely and cosmic.

We listened to the music and discussed the meaning of “Walking the cross”

### **Reaching out**

Our initial responses to James' (whose parents my husband and I have known for 30 years) meditation led us to think about reaching for the moon – the unattainable, about our physicality and about the risks of rejection we face in various situations. We talked about the risks Jesus took in his incarnation.

We also thought about how we “ought” to behave and expectations others have of us. We discussed the futility – and the use – of words, the place of silence and the appropriateness of gestures and actions. “Meeting in love” led us to I Corinthians 13 and also a discussion about Communion.

We tried to imagine what we should want on our death-beds!!!

### **Dancing Days**

We all found it hard to conceive we could manage 40 days of silence – tho' most of us felt we'd appreciate it much of the time. We weren't sure we are “good enough at prayer” We discussed body language and dancing – most thought about “proper dancing” rather than modern “jigging about”! – and why it is expressive and enjoyable – and we did acknowledge that liturgical dance has a role – tho' most of us would feel fairly useless at doing it.

We read about David dancing before the Ark – II Samuel 6.12-16 and Michal's reaction and we looked at Lord of the Dance.

### **The Copyist**

We spent some time discussing our schooldays before we heard Tiffany's piece and thought about the public humiliation of not being good at various activities and also the respect given to those who were good at them.

We reflected on art in religion (harking back to a particularly good Lent course in which our RC priest showed slides of artist's representations of the Passion) and also on being People of the Word. We read Ecclesiasticus 39.1-11 and admired scholars. We linked the Word and Wisdom of God and thought of “God in mind, heart and lips”  
Can we be religious without words (cp Dancing Days)?

Reaching for the Bible – we asked round the room – “Which two books one OT, one NT, would you choose to take on your desert island? Isaiah, Psalms, Luke and John came high on the list.

At that point we discussed the students and how impressed we were with them.....

### **“Search me O God”**

We read Ps 139 before we heard Sarah's meditation. We were all very moved by her words and spent time discussing being a person and being relegated to non-person status. We presumed that few legal processes would make one feel much better!! We empathized with her and her family in the situation. We thought about the intimate God and how he knows us through and through.

Sarah's rewriting of Psalm 139 was magnificent and we felt humbled that she had opened up her innermost thoughts so generously.

### **Wait for the Lord**

We spent a little time talking about the Taize community and its music – none of us had visited there, but most of us had been at Taize style acts of worship. We thought about the merits of simple repetition.

Robert's admission that he found himself looking forward to prayer reminded us of David's epithet of his retreat prayer – "delicious". Some, but not many of us, could identify a moment of conversion or new insight in our spiritual lives, but we all appreciated Robert's remarks, "I was not chasing after God." and "As soon as I came to rest, God came."

We talked of the merits of giving ourselves changes of experience in prayer (we've recently had a diocesan Planting in Prayer initiative), the place of music in worship and guarding against an excess of emotion or mass hysteria. Then we enjoyed the chant.

### **Thoughts of Dawn**

Several of the group know Alexandra as she is our daughter and grew up in the parish.

We began by calling to mind quotations about the Fatherhood of God, then read two passages from Anselm and Julian about Jesus our Mother (both CW canticles) and discussed the differences between motherhood and fatherhood – even in these politically correct days!

We reflected on times when Jesus felt overwhelmed by his task and on Mary's possible feelings of inadequacy at her role and we discussed Alexandra's parental feelings – of responsibility, inadequacy etc. and our own experiences. We also thought of how our best moments as parents reflect God's care for us.

### **The Westcott Icon**

With the help of an encyclopedia of Christianity, I gave a little talk about icons, their significance and history and we looked at some in books of art, discussing their style and common features.

We talked about John's feelings of being loved, though aware of his sinfulness. We asked ourselves some questions – What did Jesus see from the manger/ on the mount of Beatitudes/ from the cross?

Do we see as Jesus sees?

Are we content to be seen with Jesus' eyes?

What does Jesus see when he looks at me? (We wrote the answers to this one – but did NOT share them!)

### **John's Coffin**

I felt this could be particularly sensitive ground if someone had recently suffered bereavement – and some did speak of their experiences of death and funerals. We felt happy with the idea that heaven and earth are not too far apart and that praise is not an inappropriate response to death. We reflected on the universality of the experience and on seeing things from different dimensions. We quoted the Westminster Confession about the chief end of man being to praise God.

## **Grief and Joy**

This again was a sensitive issue as some of the group had experienced marriage break-up

We read Ecclesiastes 3 and compared it with John Donne's prayer about the sameness of heaven (sounds a bit boring – there might be more excitement in the other place!). We talked about the reality, even the necessity, of contrasts and of the creative tension between them and of the possibility of experiencing grief and joy at the same time.

We commented on the bereavement experience and quoted one wife who insisted on packing her husband's belongings for a trial separation so she could feel a little less out of control of the situation!

We could relate to Carolin's feelings of being upheld by God and discussed whether her vocation would have come to birth or been possible to fulfil if she had remained married. That led to a discussion as to whether God engineers situations or makes use of what we have done – or whether it's all a coincidence.

We felt her personal experience, which she has generously shared, will help her to empathise with many people in similar circumstances and give them hope.

We realize that it is often out of sad, tragic, ghastly, difficult times that personal growth occurs. This meditation seemed to us a resurrection experience.

## **General Comments**

We were encouraged to think these people are offering themselves for priesthood – it gives us hope for our often beleaguered Church! We appreciated their honesty and the authenticity of their comments. Our own faith in God, through our life experiences, was reinforced.