

Emma's Story

Emma's* story is a beautiful example of how God works through his people to bless the folk they meet on their frontlines. It shows how he takes our small offerings of obedience and does more with them than we could imagine. And it's an encouragement that each of us can bear good, kingdom fruit in our daily lives – even in times of immense pressure like the Covid pandemic.

Emma takes up the story in her own words:

'Before "stay at home" was the new catchphrase of the moment, the fear had already started to spread. At the pharmacy where I work, we saw it coming. The daily enquiries for facemasks and hand sanitiser started as a trickle and soon became a tsunami. Toilet rolls and cleaning products were scooped up. Conversations with customers were edged with anxiety, full of what-ifs and preparations for battle with an unknown, unseen enemy.

'Only a few months into this new frontline in my life, I found myself labelled a "key worker". As the rest of the country stayed in, I walked to work through deserted streets, under a bright blue sky full of birdsong. I know God goes with me and so I prayed as I went past dog-walkers and joggers, doing the "dodge-out-of-the-way-sorry" move around people coming the other way. I prayed about the day ahead, for peace, protection and for opportunities to show God's love to the people I met. I thought of God's goodness and mercy following me, and was challenged to wear my gold cross necklace in case it spurred a conversation.

'In the shop, I had many opportunities to send up a prayer for those who'd been waiting for a prescription, those who hadn't spoken to anyone else all day, those who were frightened and vulnerable. I was reassured I was where God wanted me to be.

'One day, early on, when I was on door duty waiting to let a customer out, I heard her say to a colleague at the counter: "and I've even tried praying!" So, as she passed me, I encouraged her by saying "keep praying. He will hear you."

'I recognised her as a regular customer and prayed for another chance to speak to her. It was a while before she came back, this time concerned about her sick cat, but it wasn't the right time to ask about her praying.

'Then, one afternoon, on my way home, I had a gentle nudge from God to walk a slightly different route than usual, and there she was! She recognised me and welcomed a conversation about praying and faith. I told her about my church's online services, and she said she'd watch and would come to the pharmacy and tell me what she thought of it.

'I didn't see her for several weeks after that, but when I did, she had watched the service and had particularly found the children's talk helpful and said she was still praying. I pray that those prayers will be her first steps in a journey towards faith in Christ.

'Seeing how God worked through me on my frontline to speak to that woman has encouraged me to listen for his still, small voice guiding me in my daily life. And it inspired me to take the opportunities he provides to speak up for him – even in the middle of an ordinary work day.'

Jesus sends out the disciples (Mk 6:6b-13)

This almost reads like a newspaper report - very concise

It does not say how long this period is - it could be weeks

Jesus went around teaching from village to village - that would take some time

Something new: Jesus instructs his disciples to do the same work as he has done up till now

as we can see in v12-13

They went out

Preached that people should repent

Drove out many demons

Anointed people will oil those who were ill

And healed them

Preparation

1. Sending them out two by two

They were not asked to do this work on their own

They needed each other

Complimentary gifts

Accountable to each others

and at that time: no NHS - what to do when you had an accident

2. Gave them authority of impure spirits

Jesus recognises the Spiritual world

There are other Spirits then the Holy Spirit

And some of these are impure or evil

Jesus has authority over them - as he is the Son of God

Jesus delegated his authority to them

Temporarily?

So that they could do what Jesus did.

! Evil Spirits - do they exist?!

3. Practical instructions

For that time!

Later on we see Jesus giving different instructions

Equipment

No luggage

Wear sensible clothing

Staff, Sandals

But do not bring spares

They were going to be dependent

On God's provision

On other people's provision

Accommodation

The hospitality rules in Israel

Someone will put you up

Stay with them - they've invited you

Rejection

Leave - do not go against the grain

But warn them anyway

Dust of feet

Discussion

If this story happened today, what would it look like?

How can you compare this story with Emma's story?

How can you compare this story to our own situation?

What are these stories saying to me / us?

Could these stories make a difference to my life? How?