



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Luke 1:46-49 'Mary Sings God's Praise'

⁴⁶ And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.



Gideon was a man who followed God's command to help defeat the Midianites. You are probably aware of the bibles that are found in hotel rooms, but they also put them in schools, universities, military and medical establishments among others. These are venues I was not so aware of, nor that the bible covers vary in colour accordingly. Gideon International (now known as Good News UK) is responsible for this work which started in 1899. Worldwide distribution of the first billion scriptures spanned 93 years, but the second billion took just 13 years. Two copies of God's word are given out per second! Their faith and obedience to pass on the Good News is clear.

Today, more than ever, we are called to have faith in our political leaders and it not always easy. There are many examples of different folk, disciples and prophets in the Bible who were faithful and obedient to God. Gideon was one such who followed God's command: 'Peace, don't be afraid' the Angel told him. He started with 32,000 men and God whittled it down to 300! Gideon's foes ended up turning on one another, giving victory to the Israelites.

However, just like Gideon, and most characters in the bible, we have to be taught and shown how to be a disciple of the Lord God. One notable exception, of course, was Mary, when she was told by the Angel, with the same words as with Gideon, that she was carrying the Lord. She immediately praised God with her Magnificat, part of which is above.

Like Gideon and Mary, we can work with a little bit of faith and obedience to pass on and act to do as Christ commanded his disciples, assuring them that he will ALWAYS be with us.

Prayer: *Pray through the words of Charles Wesley's great hymn (StF 661).*

Give me the faith which can remove and sink the mountain to a plain;
give me the childlike praying love, which longs to build thy house again;
thy love, let it my heart o'erpower, and all my simple soul devour.

I would the precious time redeem, and longer live for this alone:
to spend, and to be spent, for them who have not yet my Saviour known;
fully on these my mission prove, and only breathe, to breathe thy love.

My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord, into thy blessed hands receive;
and let me live to preach thy word, and let me to thy glory live;
my every sacred moment spend in publishing the sinners' friend.

Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart with boundless charity divine:
so shall I all my strength exert, and love them with a zeal like thine;
and lead them to thy open side, the sheep for whom their Shepherd died.