

# flow

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MESSAGE *the message*



## TURNING POINT

BATTLING DEPRESSION AND DRUGS, KELLY'S LIFE CHANGED FOREVER AS GOD BROKE IN

# *'It really is all because of him and for him and again, our role is to be people that first and foremost exalt him'*

Dear friends,

I hope you are well and encouraged and I hope that you'll be even more encouraged as you read this issue of Flow and hear about what God's been doing as we step out in mission.

Recently, I presented the Message team with a little card I'd had produced with 'The ABC of The Message' on it. I challenged them all to regularly look at it and reflect on it as I believe that this simple ABC could literally be game-changing for them and for The Message as a whole.

A few months earlier, I'd been on a walk with the Lord and had a strong impression that he was speaking to me (I even wrote a little song about it but I'll keep that one between me and him!)

In short, A is for attitude – the Bible says that we must have the attitude of Christ, which of course is easier said than done but if we could somehow be quick to forgive and even love our enemies the way he did then I truly believe that we would attract God's attention and favour. B is for Bible – our job is to be Bible teaching evangelists and as such we must teach the whole counsel of scripture and not carefully remove the bits we don't like and things that don't fit in with



the tide of our culture. C, of course is for Christ. It really is all because of him and for him and again, our role is to be people that first and foremost exalt him.

So there it is, our simple ABC. During my time with the Lord, I also felt him say 'Focus on these three things and watch what I will do', and nothing that has happened since has convinced me otherwise. I hope as you read this edition of Flow that you will agree.

God bless,

**Andy Hawthorne**  
 Founder & Global CEO, The Message Trust

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*P.S. If you would like one of these ABC cards to keep in your purse or wallet, or somewhere prominent, just get in touch and I will gladly send one over to you. Just email info@message.org.uk*



**OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT**  
 The paper used for Flow is manufactured using pulp sourced from sustainable sources from within Europe. It is 100% TCF (Totally Chlorine Free) and is manufactured to ISO14001 standards.

## Moving into the favelas!

Our very first South American Eden team has just been launched by Message Brazil. Around 7,000 people call Santa Marta in Rio de Janeiro home, and it's here that an Eden team has moved in, doing life with their new neighbours and sharing Jesus' love. Read about what happened as they put on a kids' club on **page 11**



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## FESTIVAL BOMBO

# 748 respond to the gospel!



FOR THREE days in December, Bombo in Uganda was transformed into a hive of activity packed with music, sports events and activities for children and young people as Festival Bombo landed! As over 80 local churches and organisations came together with Message Uganda to make a lasting impact on communities, the gospel was shared in word and action and lives were impacted.

But the festival weekend was just one part of months of mission in and around Bombo.

## The journey to the festival

We were desperate to practically share Jesus' love, so headed into neighbourhoods.

Clean water projects reopened old wells giving families access to safe water, roads were repaired and front yards and community spaces were tidied. At the same time, many different outreach events were run meaning that everyone could hear about Jesus' love for them. These included a Bloom conference that shared the

gospel with 135 teenage girls, prison outreach that told 200 prisoners about the hope Jesus offers them, and events for young people.

One of the youth events was a football tournament that teams from the local high schools were invited to be part of. As hundreds of people from the neighbourhoods in and around Bombo turned up to take part and cheer the teams on, they also heard the gospel and were invited to the festival weekend.

## Festival Bombo lands

The three-day open-air festival was the culmination of two years of passionate prayer. 8,517 young people and locals came along to

enjoy all the free activities on offer including bouncy castles, face painting and creative arts. Boxing, football and netball tournaments also ran throughout the days drawing huge crowds of young people, with bulls as prizes for the winners!

Every evening the main stage was filled with music and dance performances by artists from Uganda, Kenya and South Africa, including local worship bands Bunjoville and The Collective UG, dance troupe Sabula Nation, Richie Zion, Jordyn Toohey, and many more.

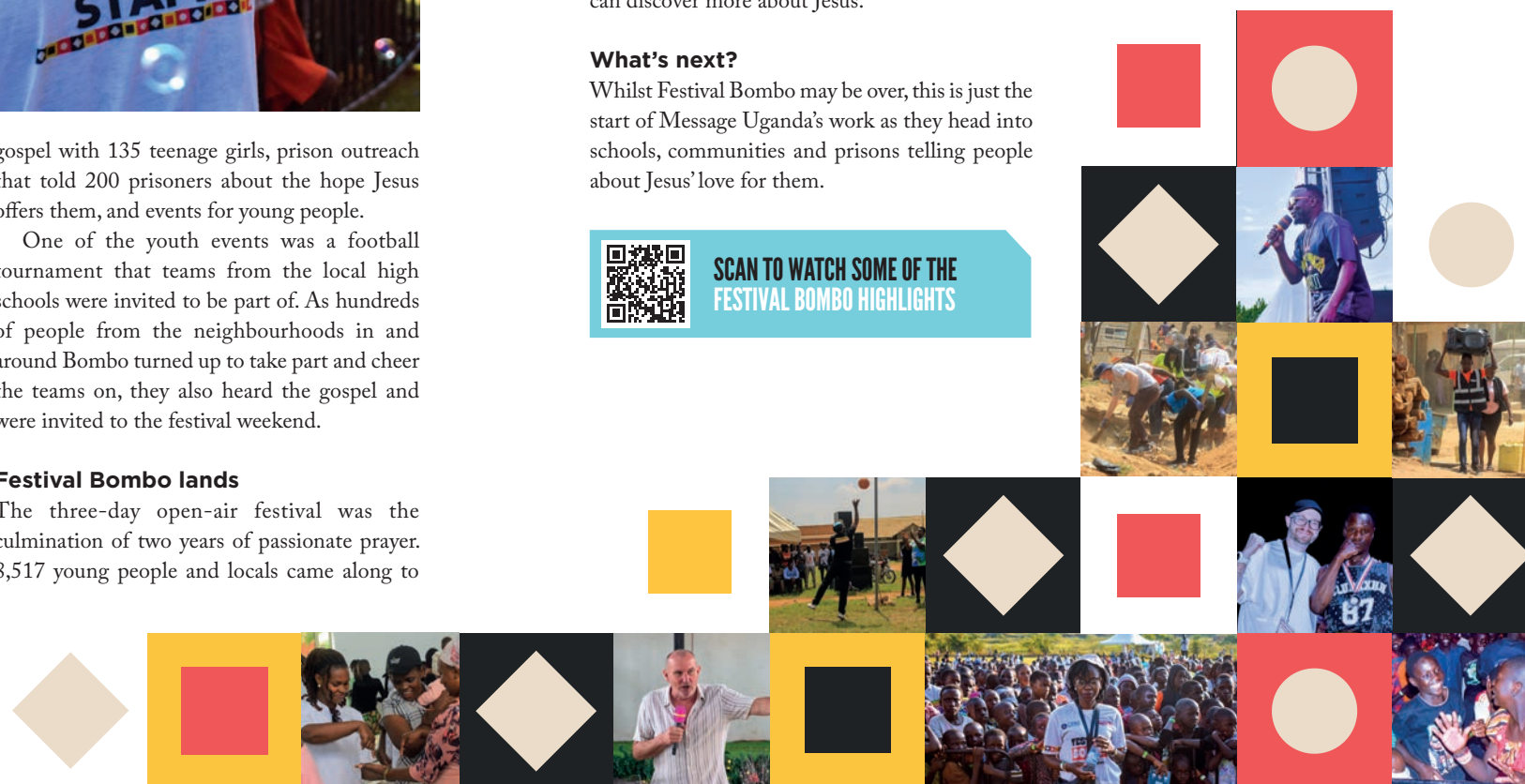
Telling people about Jesus was at the heart of Festival Bombo, so regardless of where people were or what activities they were taking part in, they got to hear the gospel as it was shared throughout the festival site. Then each evening, powerful testimonies and the gospel were shared from the stage. 748 responded straight away and gave their lives to God! Each of them has now been connected with a local church so that they can discover more about Jesus.

## What's next?

Whilst Festival Bombo may be over, this is just the start of Message Uganda's work as they head into schools, communities and prisons telling people about Jesus' love for them.



SCAN TO WATCH SOME OF THE  
FESTIVAL BOMBO HIGHLIGHTS





# MISSION

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PEOPLE HEARD THE GOSPEL

AS YOUNG PEOPLE SHARED ABOUT JESUS DURING TWO WEEKS OF THE SCATTERING MISSION AND

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RESPONDED

‘HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO JESUS AND WENT FROM BEING GUARDED BY SIX STAFF TO HELPING OTHERS ON THE WING’

ELISHA, MESSAGE IN PRISONS

01



8,517

PEOPLE ATTENDED FESTIVAL BOMBO AND HEARD THE GOSPEL!



‘WE WANTED OUR FRIENDS AND TEACHERS TO KNOW HOW LOVED THEY ARE BY Jesus’

02



‘YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS THAN I DO, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THE LESSON?’

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NEW ADVANCE GROUPS

LAUNCHED AROUND THE WORLD ON ONE DAY THIS JANUARY



‘THE WAY I USED TO BEHAVE WASN'T THE REAL ME.

BUT NOW I'VE FOUND FAMILY IN THE CHURCH AND THE GROCERY’

KEV, COMMUNITY GROCERY MEMBER

04



READ MORE ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AS WE HEAD OUT ON MISSION

[message.org.uk/impact](https://message.org.uk/impact)

01. ‘I started working with one of the most violent guys in prison. As I told him about Jesus, he responded. The change in him was massive. He’s now been released and I’m helping him get plugged into church.’

02. Desperate for their friends to know Jesus, two sisters, Esther and Maisy, helped us take the Still Standing tour into their school. 2,500 students were in the lessons where the sisters shared what Jesus means to them. At the gig, 72 responded.

03. Eden Central Drive got to know Aiden\* and he met Jesus. During an RE lesson, Aiden kept raising his hand to answer the questions. The teacher said he should take the lesson, so he taught the whole class about Jesus’ death and resurrection!

04. Kev regularly shopped in a Community Grocery but was angry and lonely. Then he joined the Eden team’s allotment club and life changed. Through the wrap-around support, he went on an Alpha course and discovered Jesus.

## ADVANCE

# Disciples making disciples



With the church across Africa growing at its fastest rate ever, we love how desperate Christians are about sharing their faith, and that Advance is getting to play its part in equipping men and women to do this with a new boldness.

Over 200,000 people around the globe now meet in Advance groups every month to be equipped before heading out to put what they've learnt into action. And it's people of all ages who are sharing the gospel. In Portugal, 13 young people were recently baptised in Porto because of two Advance groups led by teenagers! Aline was one of those who gave her life to Jesus at an outreach led by an Advance group. Seeing the change in her life, her family were so impacted that they all wanted to know more about Jesus and have given their lives to him! Today, three new Advance groups are being run by different members of Aline's family who are desperate to share their faith.

AS ADVANCE groups continue to grow at a staggering rate around the world, we've just launched in our 104th nation – Burundi.



**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ADVANCE AT**  
[advancegroups.org](http://advancegroups.org)

## CHURCH VISITS

# Challenge your church

WE LOVE nothing more than getting the church excited for mission and to reach their community with the good news of Jesus.

So, we have a team of speakers right across the UK ready to inspire and challenge your church, event or festival with powerful stories of how God is moving in schools, prisons and

urban communities, as well as powerful Bible teaching. Why not book one of them today?



**FIND OUT MORE AND BOOK AT**  
[message.org.uk/book-a-speaker](http://message.org.uk/book-a-speaker)

## EVENTS

# Message on tour

**THIS year we're hitting the roads and going on tour! From Cardiff to Stockton, we'll be sharing stories of what God's doing in people's lives and thanking him for all he's done.**

We'd love for you to be there and celebrate with us. Every evening will be packed with stories, worship and teaching from our very own Andy Hawthorne, and we promise you'll leave excited about how God's moving across our country. Events are happening in:

Cardiff - Friday 9 May, All Nations Cardiff  
 Stockton-on-Tees - Thursday 22 May, Tees Valley Community Church  
 Derby - Thursday 30 October, Reach Derby  
 Leeds - Date to be confirmed



**GRAB YOUR FREE TICKETS TODAY**  
[message.org.uk/tour](http://message.org.uk/tour)

## EDEN

# Fun in the favela



EDEN Santa Marta in Brazil have hit the ground running. As local kids broke up for their holidays, the team worked with five churches to put on an eight-day summer camp. 110 children got involved in the sports, activities and fun that filled the community and as they did, they heard about Jesus.

During the same week, the team and volunteers also helped their neighbours practically, offering them medical care and hairdressing. As they did this, they chatted to people about Jesus in the street, visited families

and even held an open-air service outside a well-known drug den.

And God was on the move. Dozens of people let the team pray for them, six people responded to the gospel and off the back of the camp, a local church has decided to relaunch its kids' club so that they can keep connecting with their neighbours.



**READ MORE EDEN STORIES AT**  
[message.org.uk/eden](http://message.org.uk/eden)

## THE CHARGE

# Taking up the charge

WE'RE passionate about seeing young people growing in their faith and wanting to tell others about it, so The Charge was born – all about encouraging and equipping churches to raise up young people who are excited and able to share the gospel in every situation. We caught up with Aaron Routledge who oversees The Charge to hear more.

## Why is it called The Charge?

In 2 Timothy chapter 4, Paul passes on an important charge to Timothy: to proclaim the gospel. This charge that Paul received from Jesus and handed on to Timothy, has been passed on through the centuries to us today. We want to raise up a generation desperate to share the gospel and resource them to do this. Imagine what our schools, churches and families would look like if this happened!

## How does The Charge support young people and churches?

Through Charge days and The Scattering! On Charge days, our teams head to churches to spend a day training their young people to be able to tell people about Jesus. The Scattering are

weeks of mission that happen in the summer holidays (this year in London, Wales and the North East) where young people head for more training before getting sent out on missions with local churches sharing the gospel with communities.

## What impact is The Charge having?

We've seen so many young people do incredible things for Jesus as they've grown in confidence and realised that life with Jesus is an exciting adventure. Some have started Christian Unions in their schools so that their friends can ask questions about faith, others have started Bible studies to support their mates who have come to know Jesus, and countless young people on Charge Days and The Scattering are sharing the gospel with strangers and seeing people respond!

One of these young people was Michael who was part of The Scattering last summer. When a group of lads from his school ran up to him and asked, 'What are you doing?' Michael responded saying, 'Just sit down and listen.' He took a microphone and began to share the gospel and his testimony in the street. His friends listened intently and when he had finished, Michael went up to them saying, 'There, that's what I believe.' In response, three of his friends chose to follow Jesus for themselves! Michael had never done anything like that before but knew that if he followed Jesus, he should be telling others about him.



CHECK OUT THE CHARGE AND GET A CHARGE DAY BOOKED AT [message.org.uk/thecharge](https://message.org.uk/thecharge)

# Reaching our nation

Catch up with the latest Message news from across the UK

## NORTH EAST, WALES & LONDON

### Young people on a mission

THE SCATTERING is getting even bigger this year as it heads to London, the North East and South Wales. Each week will see young people learn more about how to tell others about Jesus, before getting to put it into action. We can't wait to see what God's going to do. Find out more and get involved [message.org.uk/thescattering](https://message.org.uk/thescattering)

## SCOTLAND

### Say 'no' to knives

LATER this year, the No More Knives tour is heading back to Glasgow telling teenagers about the dangers of knife crime and equipping them to say 'no' to knives, all whilst pointing them to the hope they'll find in Jesus.



## WALES

### Going WILD

COMBINING high-energy activities with the gospel, games and giveaways, we partner with churches across Wales to run WILD events so they can connect with young people. At an event in Brynmawr, Alice shared the gospel and about what it means to make Jesus king of your life. 10 young people responded and are now being discipled by the local church.

## LONDON

### 10 years of mission

OUR LONDON hub is 10! What a decade it's been. Eden teams have been launched, schools missions run, prisoners have heard the gospel, Neal Street Espresso has opened and team members have joined the programme, hundreds of young people have headed out on mission and much more. All with one aim; to tell people about Jesus and see him transform lives. Here's to the next 10 years!



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[message.org.uk/news](https://message.org.uk/news)

EDEN

# Prayer. People. Pounds.

FOR 28 years, Eden's been sending teams to share the gospel in word and action in low-income communities (those named in the bottom 10% of the indices of multiple deprivation). As teams move in for the long term, we see people discover Jesus' love for them, hope break out, lives and families changed, and churches grow.



Eden remains a key part of what The Message does, and we want to launch 18 new teams in the next three years. To make this happen we need prayer, people and pounds – would you stand with us?

## Prayer

Having people faithfully praying for Eden, our work and our teams is vital as we step out. Everything we do is driven forward by prayer. Will you join us and pray for Eden? We'll send you regular prayer updates to help you in this.



## People

We need people passionate about seeing urban communities transformed to join teams. It may be moving somewhere new, returning to a place you once called home or staying where you already live to become part of the local team. Does this excite you or can you think of someone who would love Eden? We'd love to hear from you/them so we can tell you more and even invite you to see what we do first-hand.

## Pounds

Would you help us launch new teams by standing with us financially? Launching a new Eden team costs £55,000 over three years, so we need more people standing with us to see more places impacted. **1**



**PRAYER. PEOPLE. POUNDS.**  
SIGN UP TODAY OR FIND OUT MORE AT  
[joineden.org](http://joineden.org)

*Kelly is just one person whose life has been impacted as an Eden team told her about Jesus*



# TURNING POINT

If you met Kelly today you'd meet someone full of joy who can't stop talking about Jesus. But this wasn't always the case. Battling depression, drugs and chaos, Kelly hit rock bottom. Then an Eden team told her about Jesus and it all changed >

CHAOS  
CHAOS  
CHAOS  
CHAOS



to alcohol and drugs just to get through the days. My support was gone and the depression I'd struggled with as a teenager took hold. It was like the lights had gone out. I sank into a dark place and was trapped there for years feeling lost.

'Life had to carry on and I had four more children who were such a blessing to me.

## 'MY FAMILY USED TO BE KNOWN FOR CHAOS AND CAUSING TROUBLE BUT I BELIEVE GOD'S CHANGING OUR STORY'

**I** GREW up in a big family. And when I say big, I mean BIG. There are around 100 of us, and loads of us call South Bank in Middlesbrough home which I love, but unfortunately arguments, getting in trouble with the police and bad decisions mean that we're well known on the estate.

'Growing up, home life was hard. Mum and Dad loved me, but their relationship was violent and I saw things no kid should have to. This massively affected me. I'd easily get angry and frustrated, and ended up getting kicked out of school when I was just 12.

'When I was 16, I gave birth to my eldest son. I loved him more than I knew was possible, but being a teen mum was tough. Thankfully I had my parents' help. A couple of years later, my brother fell in with the wrong crowd and started taking drugs. I watched him change before my eyes, sinking deeper into trouble and I was unable to do anything to help him. As the drugs took hold, my brother tragically took another guy's life and went to prison. It was then my life changed.

'My parents split up. Dad moved overseas and my mum started self-harming, turning

'Coming home from hospital after giving birth to my second son, Riaz, I just knew something wasn't right. He struggled to eat and was in constant pain. Despite taking him back to the doctors more times than I can remember, they said he was fine. But over time it became clear this wasn't the case. They found he had a number of serious medical needs and would need full-time care.

'Caring for Riaz and my other kids pushed me to

my limits and I was also trapped in a violent relationship that I couldn't escape from. To cope, I took cocaine and quickly found myself relying on it to get through the days, thankfully, my ex got bored and ended our relationship.

'Around this time, loads of people started telling me about a place called The Open Well that ran events every Tuesday on the estate. I knew it was run by the Eden South Bank team, and even though I wasn't interested in Jesus, I wanted to see what happened there.

'As I walked in, I got a warm welcome and started chatting to Krista (the Eden team leader) who told me not only what was going on but a bit about Jesus too. A few days later, Riaz suddenly became really ill and was rushed into hospital where they found he had sepsis. As the doctors told me they weren't sure if he would survive, Riaz's heart stopped and he crashed.

'In the corridor outside his room, I collapsed to my hands and knees and cried out to God to save my boy. I also grabbed my phone and called Krista and my cousin asking them both to pray too. God heard our prayers, and the

doctors were able to stabilise Riaz (something they didn't think was possible).

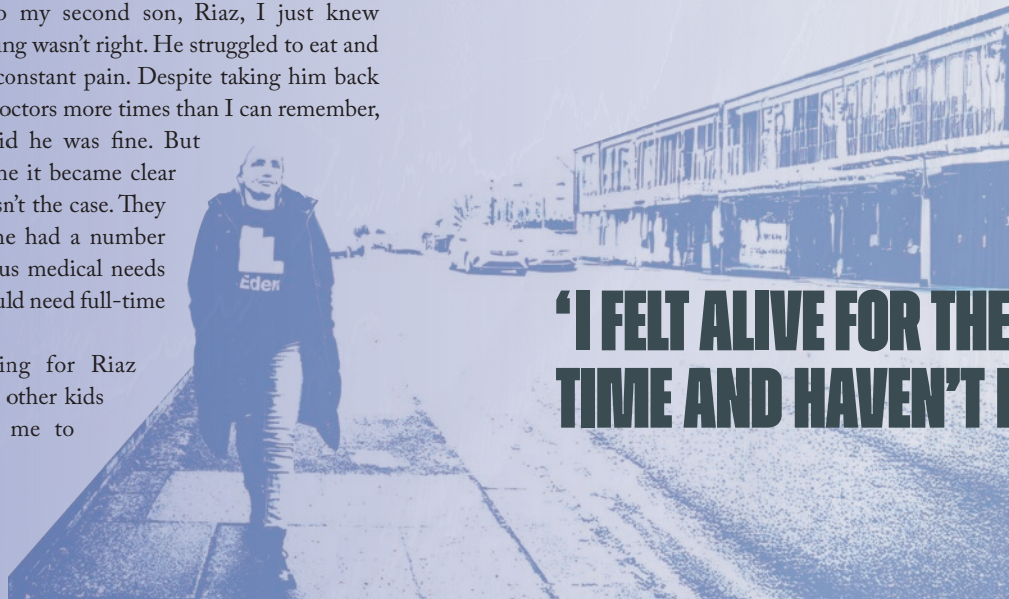
'Sitting by Riaz's bedside in intensive care, I knew I needed to know more about God. How had he healed my son? So, on my next free

NEW ME  
NEW ME



Tuesday night, I headed to The Open Well and listened as people shared about Jesus and his love. From there, I was at The Open Well every week. A few weeks later, they were having an open mic night where people could share their testimonies. As I sat in my seat I knew I needed to go up (something I wouldn't normally do). ➤

## 'I FELT ALIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME AND HAVEN'T LOOKED BACK SINCE'



‘As I shared how God had saved Riaz’s life, it all clicked into place. I knew I was loved by Jesus and couldn’t live without him. That night I gave my life to God!’

‘I felt alive for the first time in a long time and haven’t looked back since. I loved Jesus and knew I had to be all in, living every day for him so I made some big changes in my life such as giving up drugs.’

‘As I read my Bible, prayed and chatted to the Eden team about Jesus, I could feel myself changing. What surprised me most was that people around me saw the change too. I remember neighbours stopping me in the street asking what had happened to me as I was different. Me, Kelly, from ‘the family’ known for causing trouble!’

‘From that day onwards, I’ve wanted everyone to know how much Jesus loves them, and haven’t been able to stop talking about him since, whether I’m with family, spending time with friends or helping out in The Open Well. So when I got the chance to become part of the Eden team I jumped at it.’

## ‘JESUS MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME AND MORE’

‘At the same time, God’s been doing amazing things in my family. Four family members have been baptised, including Riaz, who, even though he’s non-verbal, was able to tell us how much he loves Jesus and that he wanted to be baptised! As he got into the baptism pool, he was so excited that he couldn’t wait to be lowered into the water and dunked his own head under!’

‘My family used to be known for chaos and causing trouble but I believe God’s changing our story.’

‘Jesus means everything to me and more. Without him I wouldn’t be here. Yes, there are still tough days, but I know Jesus is with me and I never face anything alone.’



READ MORE STORIES LIKE THIS AT [message.org.uk/eden](http://message.org.uk/eden)

WELCOME  
WELCOME



God has a purpose

Passionate about seeing God restore the lives of the women she works with in prison, join Kez, one of our Message in Prisons workers, behind the scenes for a typical week >

**I** LOVE being a prisons worker. Yes, prisons are places where there's so much brokenness, but I know that it's right where Jesus wants to be. Let me show you what I do each week.

### MONDAY

'Every Monday, I get to spend time at Message HQ praying and catching up with the whole prisons team, sharing stories from the previous week and planning for what's happening in the coming weeks and months. This is such an important time as it means we can not only pray together, but we can also inspire each other with what we can do to keep sharing Jesus with those we meet. I also meet up with volunteers who want to come and support me in prison.

### TUESDAY

'My Tuesdays are all about relationship building. They're mostly filled with detached work and one-to-ones where I meet people on the prison wings and houses or in the young adults' hub and build relationships with them. It's a great chance for Jesus-filled conversations. Sometimes I just listen to the women as they share about what they're going through and offer to pray for them, and other times they ask me about my story and I get to tell them about what God's done in my life. No matter how short, I know that every conversation is a seed planted.

### WEDNESDAY

'On Wednesday mornings, I run courses on Faith and Self-Esteem, Faith and Recovery, or

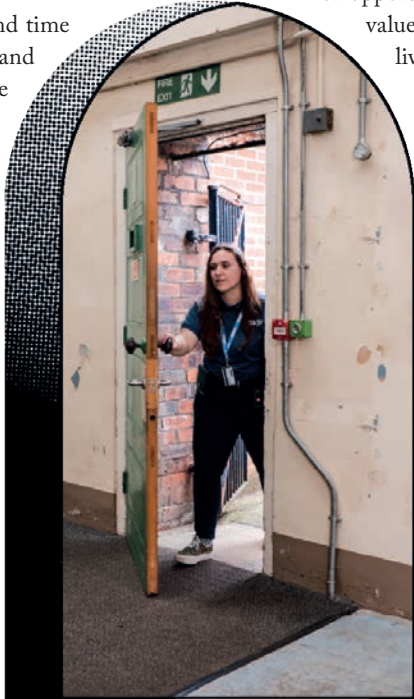
Faith and Forgiveness. They're open to all the women in the prison, and everyone is welcome. Centred on Bible teachings and Christian values, each course explores how we see ourselves versus how God sees us. It's amazing to see the change in the women. There are always loads of opportunities to chat about our value and God's plan for our lives.

'The women who come along always tell me how much they love these courses, as do the prison staff who've seen some women completely change as a result of them coming along to the sessions and learning how loved they are by Jesus. They see them want to make a positive change in their behaviour. It's so encouraging!

### THURSDAY

'I've found that those who complete the Wednesday faith courses are so excited to find out more about

Jesus that they sign up for the follow-on courses on Thursdays. These are all about next steps in faith. I love seeing the women sign up for the4points course and our resettlement-focused Bible study which has deeper Christian content and helps them grow in areas and skills they'll need both in and out of prison. Afterwards, I catch up with more of the women I work with through one-to-ones and support sessions, getting to know them, praying with them and supporting them.



## 'God can change anything and turn lives around'

### FRIDAY

'My favourite days have to be Fridays as I get to support people through the resettlement process. This looks different each week and could include everything from picking someone up at the prison gates and helping them access the support they need, to meeting a woman I've worked with for a coffee to catch up and pray together. I also help those leaving prison link up with local churches so that they can continue growing in their faith and get the wrap-around care and discipleship they need. When we find a church together, I love going along to the services with the women and helping them grow in confidence as they build relationships in the church.

### SUNDAY

'Once a month, I help lead a Sunday chapel service in prison. For these, I bring in volunteers and guests and we share our testimonies, teaching from the Bible, and worship together

– it's incredible. The women are always really engaged and want to be there. Seeing them meet with Jesus is so special – you can literally see him transforming lives and lifting their burdens!

'One lady we'll call "Lindsey" is someone whose life has been completely transformed by Jesus since I first met her in prison. When I first met her on one

of the faith courses, she was really down and negative, and felt hopeless. As I got to know her, she shared about how difficult her upbringing had been and some of the things she'd had to face in life. Even though she could sometimes be challenging to work with, I was determined to do everything I could to show Lindsey Jesus' love.

'After coming to the4points course, Lindsey wanted to find out more about faith, so started watching Alpha course videos and loved them. The next time I saw her, it was like I was talking to a totally different person! All her heaviness had lifted, and she told me how she felt more hopeful saying, "God is speaking to me, and I don't feel as low and depressed any more. I'm even praying for others on the wing." That was so powerful.

'One thing that was constantly troubling her was not knowing when her release date would be, but as she continued journeying with Jesus and praying for clarity, she was given a release date!

'I remember seeing Lindsey after she was released. We met up for a coffee and she was just shining with hope and joy. We visited churches together and met people who could support her with her resettlement and get her plugged into local discipleship.

'But then she had a wobble and took a backwards step in her progress. When I met up with her again, she looked like she was shrinking back into her old self. But as we talked, I prayed that God would reveal himself to her and renew her hope. I felt God prompting me to give >

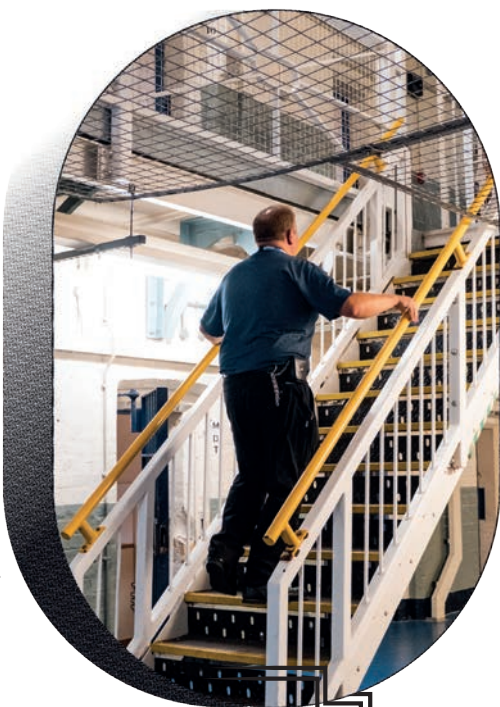




her a new Bible and when I did, her whole face lit up. Lindsey kept saying how beautiful it was and how much the gift meant to her.

'I was able to share with her again how loved and valued she is by God, despite her mistakes, and showed her Bible verses that radiated this truth. Even though Lindsey continued to struggle, she got into a rehab programme and went back to church.

'I caught up with her again recently and she talked about how important church is in her life, and she said how the Bible I gave her is right next to her bed and that she loves reading it. She looked so well again, I'm so excited to see what God continues doing in her life.



## 'God is speaking to me, and I don't feel as low and depressed any more'

'I love watching God transform lives and getting to support people on their journey to reconciliation, recovery and freedom in Christ. In many cases as prisons workers, we can't see the fruit of our conversations with people, and that's okay, we trust that God will continue working. But in some cases, like Lindsey's, I can support ex-offenders in their resettlement and watch as they continue to grow in their faith. It's such a privilege. I see so much of God's goodness.

'Many of the women I work with feel like there's no hope for them, and like they can't shake off their past and move forward. But I know God has a plan and purpose for their lives. He can change anything and turn lives around and I love helping people discover this for themselves.'



**FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED TODAY AT**  
[message.org.uk/prisons](http://message.org.uk/prisons)



# 'THE BEST WORST THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME'

Facing trial, Mo didn't know where to turn until he heard about Jesus. This is his story

'I WAS brought up in a Christian home and had a great life, but over time I went my own way and making money became the most important thing to me. I'd say I was obsessed by it. This obsession was so bad that it took over and led me to doing many things that I deeply regret. Desperate for more money, I ended up committing fraud and was charged with blackmail. I couldn't believe I'd done this, I'd hit rock bottom.

'While I was out on bail, a guy called Craig came to fix my garden wall. Part way through the day, he stopped laying bricks and started

praying! I went out and asked what he was doing, and he told me about the church he was part of and invited me to go along with him.

'Desperate for a reference to use in court, I went and wasn't ready for what happened. As I heard about Jesus' love for me, something I'd not heard about since being a kid, I knew I needed it and in tears went to the front to respond. After the service, I met Andy from the local Eden team who was so welcoming. Over the next few months, I kept going to church and got to know Andy more, in fact he was the only person apart from my wife that I told about my court case. >

He supported me through it, was there in court and was the last person I saw as I was taken down the steps to start my prison sentence.

'I felt like my life was ruined. How wrong I was! Sitting in my cell, the first person who knocked on my door was a guy called Dan who introduced himself as being part of The Message's prison team. I couldn't believe it. He invited me to the Bible study he was running and it became the highlight of my week. There, I truly fell in love with Jesus. I felt like a new person.

'Then I heard I was being moved to another prison. I thought this was the end and everything would go back to how it was before, so I started desperately praying this didn't happen. Alone in my new cell, the first knock on the door was from Elisha who introduced herself as being from The Message's prisons team. My prayers were answered! Straight away, I got involved in the Bible studies and services, carrying my Bible to them with pride instead of hiding it away. I wanted others to hear about Jesus, so started inviting guys to Bible studies and praying with others on the wing.

'One Christmas, The Message gave a present to everyone in my prison. The impact of this was massive. 'Why have they done this?', 'Why do they care about us?' were just some of the questions guys had. I was able to tell them about Jesus, and how The Message team wanted to show them his love.

'All the time I was in prison, Andy and the Eden team carried on supporting my family on the outside talking to them, praying with them and helping them practically. I can't thank them enough.

'Since I've been released, my life is completely different. I describe going to prison as the best, worst thing that's ever happened to me. I didn't want to go through it, but now I know that God wanted me there so I could fall in love with him and tell others about him. Without him and The Message team I doubt I'd have the life I have today. There's no going back.'

**'I KNOW THAT GOD WANTED ME THERE SO I COULD FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM AND TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM'**



**READ MORE STORIES OF LIVES IMPACTED IN PRISONS AT**  
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# IMPACTING Schools across SCOTLAND

'Nobody is worth less than anybody else,' 'more people should learn about this' and 'engaging, inspired, enjoyable' are just some of the comments Kate, our schools worker, gets as she delivers lessons across Scotland. We caught up with her to hear more about what's been happening

## WHAT have you been up to in schools recently?

Excitingly, it's been non-stop! As we tell schools across Scotland about The Message's schools work and the lessons we offer, we're finding that opportunities to go in are opening up more than ever before. We've taken our resilience and wellbeing tour to Stirling and Falkirk, a No More Knives tour to Glasgow, and have been in front of thousands of young people with our Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons.

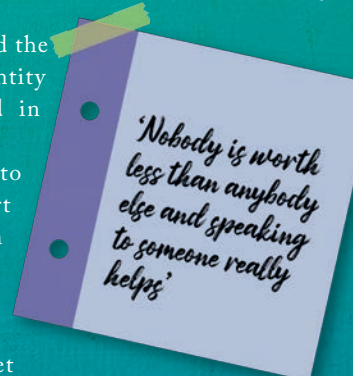
## Why are these lessons so important?

Young people need to know how loved they are by Jesus and about their true value in him. Every day, they're bombarded with messages about how they should act and behave, so it's more important than ever that they hear the truth about who they

are in Jesus and the hope and identity they can find in him.

I head into schools as part of their health and wellbeing curriculum for S1 to S6 (ages 11-17), and get to run lessons that talk from a Christian perspective about some of the most challenging topics young people may face. The aim of each lesson is that they leave not only with the skills and knowledge they need to make good decisions, but also wanting to know more about Jesus as a result of the what they've heard.

Church partnership is so important in everything both I and The Message do, as we want young people to get connected >



with local churches. So, someone from a local church comes into every school with me. Through this we're seeing teenagers heading to youth groups as well as churches getting to work in schools for the long term too.

Back in 2023, I went into Denny High School first with a resilience and wellbeing tour, and then PSE lessons. Jonathan, the minister from Denny Baptist Church, came into every lesson with me, and as a result of the relationships he built with the school's pastoral team, the church have been in the school every Thursday since, running sessions for pupils in their nurture unit.

**What's next?**

More and more lessons, and I can't wait. I've got new schools I'm starting to work with, as well as heading back into ones I've partnered with before. We're also planning another No More Knives tour very soon.



Outside of schools, I know churches in Scotland have young people desperate to know how they can talk to their friends about Jesus, so we're looking to launch The Charge with them, and I'd love to see new Eden teams launched across Scotland too. **o**

*'Very educational, more people should learn about this'*

**'I get the chance to have great conversations and even get to share my faith'**

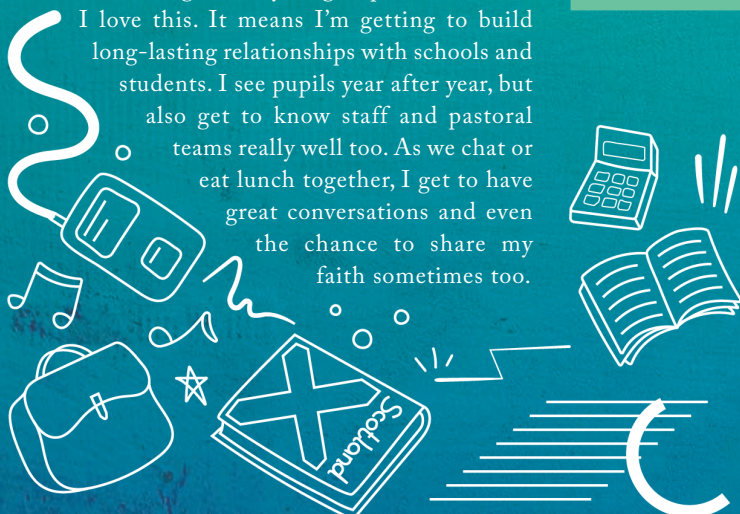
**Building relationships is key then?**

Absolutely. Lots of the schools I work with ask me to come in and run their PSE lessons for the whole school over a few weeks, rather than doing whole year group sessions. And I love this. It means I'm getting to build long-lasting relationships with schools and students. I see pupils year after year, but also get to know staff and pastoral teams really well too. As we chat or eat lunch together, I get to have great conversations and even the chance to share my faith sometimes too.



**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCOTLAND AT**  
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*'Valuable education that is needed for young adults'*



**'I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, LORD'**



*fullness of life*

*not my way*

*surrender*

*come to Jesus*



Ben Woodfield, church planter and co-leader of the Antioch Network, explores Philippians 2:12-30 and how we can learn to hand over our lives to Jesus, surrendering everything to him

**H**OW OFTEN do we come to God in prayer, only to go our own way instead of faithfully walking the path of obedience? How often do we say to Jesus, 'I'll take it from here, Lord'? But God is calling us into obedience.

Philippians 2:12-13 says, 'Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works

in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.'

It's worth saying that we're not obeying God out of duty, demand or force, but out of love for our Jesus and as a declaration of his goodness and faithfulness to us when he died on the cross to forgive our sins. Just as Jesus was obedient, so we should put to death the flesh and follow the way he lived, all fuelled from a place of love.

But Christian obedience is hard, isn't it? To surrender and pick up our cross daily, it's ➤



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*strength and power*

totally opposite to what we see in Western culture at the moment. Instead of saying to God, 'I'll take it from here', he's wanting us to hand ourselves to him saying, 'Not my way, but yours, Lord.' Jesus says in Matthew 16 that whoever wants to save their life will lose it. To experience that fullness of life, we're called to lay ourselves down, counting the cost to follow Jesus. How much is it costing you right now?

In Philippians 2:12, Paul acknowledges how obedient the Philippians have been, even when no one is looking. And that's what we need to do. We're called to not only obey God when people are watching, but in the secret place too. To pursue obedience when no one is looking – that's what counts. That's what takes our faith from a hobby, to a lived and worked-out love of God. Obedience when we wake up. Obedience when it hurts to obey. Obedience when you get nothing in return. Obedience even in the face of death. This is what counting the cost looks like, what really counts to God and what ushers in revival. I really think that revival in the West will come when we have a revival of obedience in the church.

2 Chronicles 16:9 says, 'For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.' He's longing to find hearts obedient to him! But it's hard, isn't it, to be fully committed to him when we try and do it in our strength – impossible even!

Thankfully, as we see in Chronicles, as well as Philippians 2:13, it's God who works in us, strengthening us and helping us 'act in order to fulfil his good purpose.' Obedience begins as the outworking of our faith and love, and God can give us the desire to follow him as

well as the power to grow in our obedience to him. We no longer need to say to him, 'I'll take it from here, Lord.' Instead, we can draw close to him, and ask that he strengthens us in our obedience and our want to follow him.

Jesus says in John 15:5, '...apart from me you can do nothing.' We cannot run our race well if we try and do things without God's help, strength and power. But with him, we can draw everything we need from God. And heaven cheers and celebrates with us when we draw on Jesus and choose to follow him, even when it's hard. We

don't need to have everything sorted, have a theology degree, or lots of money to follow Jesus. If you're struggling to follow Jesus in obedience, cry out to him and ask him to strengthen you because he is faithful and will strengthen you so you can step into his good will and purposes for you.

So even though it's hard, I encourage you to come to Jesus. To admit that you're weak and need his help to follow him. Grip firmly onto his word, learning to obey it and trust it. Know God is with you in your agony and suffering, ready to help and strengthen us. 🙏

*He's longing to find hearts obedient to him!*

*path of obedience*



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