

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MESSAGE

the message

flow



U-TURN

FROM A LIFE OF CRIME TO A LIFE
TURNED AROUND BY JESUS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: IN THE RIGHT PLACES | DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES

'To boldly share the good news of Jesus in word and action with the hardest-to-reach young people and places'

Dear friends,

Recently we had a short retreat with the Message Trustees and leadership team looking at the vitally important subject of mission drift. Peter Greer has written a brilliant book on the subject where he's insistent that unless you are focused and continuously work at it, you will drift as a ministry or organisation from your original purpose and vision.

I'm sure the purpose of The Message Trust is clear: 'to boldly share the good news of Jesus in word and action with the hardest-to-reach young people and places.'

We were encouraged that when we surveyed our staff and key volunteers, they know our purpose and buy into it. That's good news because it's clear that the only chance we've got of seeing the transformation we long for is by keeping the gospel of Jesus front and centre.

P.S. Many of our supporters are experiencing challenges with the cost-of-living crisis at the moment and we want to do all we can to help. We now have a national network of Community Groceries where people can find so much more than an affordable shop. However, if you are one of the fortunate ones who could afford to stand with us with a regular gift or even increase your existing gift as more and more opportunities come our way, it would mean such a lot to us. Just go to message.org.uk/flow



I hope that as you read this exciting edition of Flow you will agree that, praise God, these core and vital tenets are still what we live for.

Please continue to pray that this will always be the case, long beyond the time when all the present leaders are in heaven.

Thanks so much and God bless,

Andy Hawthorne
Founder & Global CEO, The Message Trust

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OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

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FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM

@messagetrust

New line-up revealed

Meet CJ and Elia who've joined James to make mission band OTC's brand-new line-up. Both passionate about using music to share the gospel and seeing lives transformed by Jesus, they've hit the ground running heading out on tour in Cardiff, London, Tameside and Accrington performing in schools and at LIFT gigs. Read more about creative mission on [page 19](#)

In the right places



AT THE end of last year, the UK Government released the new Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) naming the neighbourhoods in England where life is toughest. Looking at statistics on different aspects of life from income and health to education and access to services, the IMD ranks places against each other. And it's right in the places named in the bottom 10% that you'll find the Message working, because we want those who feel forgotten by society to know how loved they are by Jesus.

Blackpool was again highlighted as the town with the highest density of deprivation. Home to neighbourhoods named as the second, third,

fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth poorest, figures showed that 17% of residents can't access the food they need, 6.8% face hunger daily and 10,000 kids live in deprivation. This is why, for many years, we've been working there, showing Jesus' love in word and action.



'For the past five years, an Eden team have made the Central Drive area of Blackpool, that's sandwiched between the second and third poorest areas in the IMD, home – and what an impact they've had,' said Sam Ward, our UK CEO. 'As the team have built friendships over garden walls, shopped for their community, celebrated with their neighbours in life's highs and supported them in the lows, they've been the hands and feet of Jesus. And, as the local church and the Message have partnered together, the church is growing, people are discovering God's unconditional love for them and lives are being transformed.'

'But that's not all that's happening. Drive a few minutes down the road from Central Drive and you'll find Blackpool Community Grocery which, since opening its doors in 2022, has kept almost 4,000 families fed. As we help members put affordable food on the table, you can see a burden come off their shoulders, giving us a chance to point them to the hope Jesus offers as they shop and connect with support courses.'

'And it's not just in Blackpool where this is happening. Middlesbrough has the highest levels of child poverty anywhere in the UK and, again, here you'll find a Message Eden team and a Community Grocery pioneering work right where it's needed.'

'I love that these new stats show that The Message Trust is working in the right places, serving those Christ calls his own. We get to share his love with those who desperately need to hear it.'



'I'm confident that Jesus would have paid close attention to the IMD. The One who was born into poverty, fled as a refugee and identified himself with the hungry, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner seemed to prioritise those in greatest need. Follow Jesus and he will lead you to the margins and to those experiencing poverty, and that's what we at the Message are called to do and will keep doing.'



**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHERE
THE MESSAGE IS WORKING**
message.org.uk/imd





MISSION

STATS & STORIES

108 NATIONS
AROUND THE WORLD
HAVE LAUNCHED
ADVANCE GROUPS

“JESUS CHANGED
MY FAMILY”

SARAH, COMMUNITY GROCERY MEMBER

01

“OTHER
PEOPLE
NEED
TO HEAR
ABOUT
JESUS”

02

248,000
STREAMS
OF OUR GOSPEL-PACKED TRACKS
THIS YEAR (APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026)

01. As she shopped in store, Sarah heard about the support courses being run for members and started going along. There, as she heard about Jesus, everything changed. Not only has Sarah given her life to Jesus and been baptised, but her mum, dad and brother have too!

02. After years of struggling with her mental health, Chelsey heard about Genetik Sessions. As she went along, everything began to change. Chelsey started to discover more about Jesus and headed to church. There, she gave her life to Jesus, got baptised and now uses every opportunity to share the gospel.

“I KNOW ABOUT JESUS IN MY
BUT I WANT TO KNOW HIM IN MY

HEAD HEART”

03

**3,500 FOOD
HAMPER**

WERE GIVEN OUT TO
COMMUNITY GROCERY
MEMBERS AT CHRISTMAS
OUTREACH EVENTS,

THANKS TO OUR
SUPPORTERS

04

90

MEN RESPONDED
TO THE GOSPEL
AT AN OUTREACH
EVENT MESSAGE
SOUTH AFRICA
PUT ON IN THEIR
PRISON

“THE GOSPEL IS FOR
ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE”



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

message.org.uk/impact

04. As Message Brazil got involved in helping to train 150 young people in evangelism, two deaf teenagers came along wanting to learn how to share the gospel through sign language. 'It reminded me that the gospel is for absolutely everyone' shared one of the young people.

EDEN

Fireworks and finding faith

ALWAYS looking for ways to get to know members of their community, the Eden Kensington team in Liverpool decided to give out free hot chocolate at a local fireworks display.

Inundated with people wanting to stay warm, they got to chat with loads of their neighbours, including a single mum who'd come along with her six boys. As they talked, the team invited her along to church that Sunday and they all came along.

Since then, God's turned their family's story around. They've all become part of the church, heading to services and joining a home group.



And as they discovered more about God's love for them, they've each accepted Jesus into their lives and are planning to get baptised. The boys have also been enjoying reading the Bible, working through the Psalms with the Eden team.



READ MORE STORIES LIKE THIS AT
message.org.uk/stories

ADVANCE

What a day!

WHAT an incredible Global Advance Day we had that saw a staggering 15,000 new groups launched, including in Mauritius, a brand-new Advance nation.

When Edward, one of our Advance team in Africa, visited Mauritius he met with church



leaders and Christians hungry to reach their neighbourhoods with the gospel. As he told them about Advance, the free resources it offers and how it helps to equip us all to use every opportunity to share the good news of Jesus, 1,882 new groups were launched!

God keeps moving through Advance. Can you believe that it's predicted there'll be 500,000 believers being disciplined monthly in groups around the globe by mid-2026!



GET INVOLVED WITH AN ADVANCE GROUP HERE IN THE UK AT
advancegroups.org

GLOBAL VISION NIGHT

Not to be missed



JOIN us as we celebrate all God's doing in the lives of the least, the last and the lost at the Message Global Vision Night on Wednesday 16 September 2026, 7:30pm at Lighthouse Church, Manchester.

Packed with powerful testimonies about how God's transforming lives as the Message steps out on mission, live music from NXT CHAPTR, OTC and SoulBox, and with very special guests Warehouse Worship, all hosted by Sam Ward and Andy Hawthorne. It's going to be a night that's not to be missed.

Tickets are just £5 and are going to go fast, so grab yours today.



GET YOUR TICKETS AT
message.org.uk/vision-night

PRISONS

Strength to strength

GOD is on the move in prisons, turning lives around as men, women and young people discover the hope and love Jesus offers them, but our work doesn't stop at the prison gates.

In Wales, Owain has been working with Darren, whose faith had been growing as they met. As he got closer to his release date, Darren knew he'd need structure and support to keep walking with Jesus and not fall back into old behaviours. Knowing this is what he wanted, Owain was able to help Darren get a place in a Christian rehab and, from there, he's gone from strength to strength. Since completing the programme, Darren's started working as a support worker and is living every day for Jesus. He hopes to one day share his testimony at a



prison chapel service so that he can encourage others who are where he once was that there is hope.



READ MORE STORIES FROM OUR PRISONS TEAM AT
message.org.uk/prisons

Reaching our nation

Catch up with the latest Message news from across the UK.

SCOTLAND

Charging forward

THE CHARGE is about supporting churches to raise up missional young people – and we're launching in Scotland. Team member Louisa has hit the ground running, training a youth group in how to share their faith and helping them put it into practice.



NORTH EAST

Launching sports ministry

73 YOUNG people were recently shown how they can use their creative gifts as an evangelism tool in Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Northallerton as they got involved in our sports ministry.



EAST MIDLANDS

Getting creative

SINCE launching Genetik Sessions in Derby, teenagers have been coming along to the creative workshops. One young person recently told the team how the sessions are helping her grow in her faith.



WALES

New life in Jesus

WE'VE launched prison ministry in a new prison in Wales! 16 men recently finished an Alpha course there and one said, 'It's been life changing. Now I've got a new life moving forward with Jesus.'



LONDON

Encouraging and equipping

2,337 STUDENTS were equipped to make positive choices when the No More Knives tour headed into their schools. 'It's been incredible having the band in my school. I now feel more confident sharing my faith with my friends', is what one young person told us.



SUBSCRIBE TO WEEKLY NEWS UPDATES
message.org.uk/connect

Upcoming events



HERE'S JUST SOME OF WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. FIND OUT MORE AT message.org.uk/events



15 April 2026

Exploring Eden (online)

12 May 2026

Message School of Evangelism
Open Day (online)

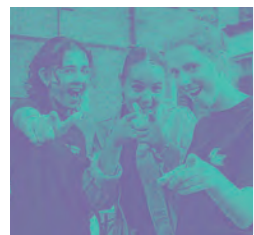
15 - 16 May 2026

Manchester: Proximity Conference



12 June 2026

Derby: Derbyshire Youth
Prayer and Worship Night



10 July 2026

Redcar: LIFT gig

18 - 24 July 2026

London: The Scattering

15 - 21 August 2026

South Wales: The Scattering

22 - 28 August 2026

North East: The Scattering

16 September 2026

Manchester: Global Vision Night



Who's influencing you?

YOU don't have to look far today to see someone telling you the next thing you should buy or where you need to go on your holiday. Head online and the voices just get louder and grow in number. The rise of the influencer has been huge.

How, in the midst of this, do young people decide whether influences are positive or not, and how do we point them to Jesus?

In steps our new 'The Ultimate Influencer' lesson. We caught up with Emma Owen, Head of Youth Engagement, to hear more about it.

Why is the topic of influencers so important?

Emma: Influencers hold significant power over young people. They can shape perceptions, relationships and even behaviours, both positively and negatively, and there's a growing need to help young people realise and understand the power they hold. But as well as this we want young people to discover the greatest influencer of all, Jesus.

Tell us more about The Ultimate Influencer lesson.

Emma: After discussing world influencers past and present, we introduce students to Jesus. As we explore how he affected the world and still shapes it today, as well as what the Bible

says about Jesus, we boldly present the gospel to every young person we meet in class using the 4 points.

Our hope is that every young person leaves the lesson not only knowing how to make good choices about who they allow to influence their lives, but also wanting to explore more about Christianity too.

How is the lesson changing lives?

Emma: At the end of each session, we ask students an important question – what have you learnt about influence today? And I love reading the answers that come back. Whether it's a 14-year-old saying, 'That the people you look up to can change you' or, more importantly, a 16-year-old saying, 'That you need to have the right influence in life and Jesus is the best influence on the way we live.'

The fact we always head into school with the local partner church means that, as teenagers want to find out more about Jesus, we can connect them with follow-up straight away. 📌



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ULTIMATE INFLUENCER LESSON AND HOW YOU CAN GET IT INTO YOUR SCHOOL AT message.org.uk/influencer



U-TURN

Once called 'Manchester's smallest car thief' by the police, Bobby had been caught up in crime since he was 11 and spent years in and out of prison until God turned his life around. This is his story ➤

'MY CHILDHOOD was chaotic. I was put into care and bounced from children's home to children's home for years. I was desperate to be loved and accepted so I looked everywhere I could to try and find this, and ended up heading down a path I shouldn't have.

I first started stealing cars with a group of mates when I was 11, and we used to joke that I was the smallest robber on the estate! Quickly we moved on from car theft and the crime I got involved in became really serious, but no-one stopped me or tried to point me in the right direction. At the same time, drugs started to overtake my life and I didn't care about anything or anyone.

'When I was 11, I was first sent to prison. And I would love to say it made me want to

'I HONESTLY WASN'T LOOKING FOR JESUS, I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU'



turn my life around, but it didn't. Drugs, crime and violence were all I knew, my life revolved around them, and it was all I cared about. I found myself caught up in the cycle of reoffending, and every time I got released, I was soon back in prison. In fact, I spent 19 Christmases in prison.

'Ten years ago, whilst I was in prison, I had a massive heart attack and stroke and knew something had to change. I needed to stop taking the drugs, make something of my life and turn it around, both for my sake, and for and my grandkids. Even though I didn't know Jesus then, I can see now that I was desperate for him. That was my last prison sentence.

'A few years later, my girlfriend, Sam, was given a leaflet about the Community Grocery and signed up to become a member. If I'm honest, I was embarrassed that, despite working full time, we needed help with the cost of our food shopping. But as I went shopping with her, I could see that the store was different to anywhere else I'd ever been. It wasn't like a normal food bank or shop; people were interested in you and had your back.



'One evening, I was sat at home with Sam, and she said she'd got some tickets for a Christmas event that the Community Grocery were putting on, and that as part of it they were giving out food hampers to every member. If you'd told me a few years ago that I'd think about going to a family event put on by a church, I wouldn't have believed you but Sam and I went and it was mind-blowing! As we got involved in the fun, I heard the Christmas story like I'd never heard it before and, as we left, they gave us the hamper. I couldn't believe how much was packed in there.

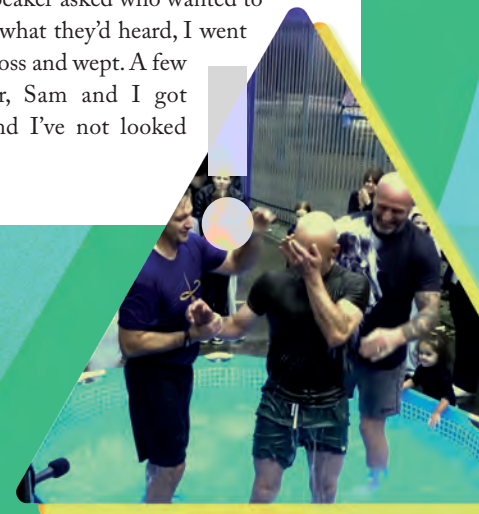
'I NEVER DREAMT LIFE COULD BE THIS GOOD. JESUS IS NOW MY LIFE'

'Leaving with my hamper, I knew I needed to go to the church service they'd mentioned to say thank you and tell them how much it had meant to me. I honestly wasn't looking for Jesus, I just wanted to say thank you. If you'd asked me at the time, I'd have told you I was a Buddhist as I meditated every day but still couldn't find the peace I was desperate for.




'That Sunday, sat in the church service. As I listened to them share about Jesus and how much God loves and accepts each of us, no matter how much we've messed up, it was like they were talking just to me. This is what I'd been looking for all those years. I felt loved more than I ever had done in my life. I felt a peace that I had only ever dreamt of feeling, and had a joy that I didn't know could exist.

'I was hooked and kept going back to church week after week to hear more about Jesus and couldn't put the Bible they'd given me down. When I heard that they were holding a church weekend away, Sam and I went along. The first night there, I knew I had to give my life to Jesus so, as the speaker asked who wanted to respond to what they'd heard, I went up to the cross and wept. A few weeks later, Sam and I got baptised and I've not looked back. >



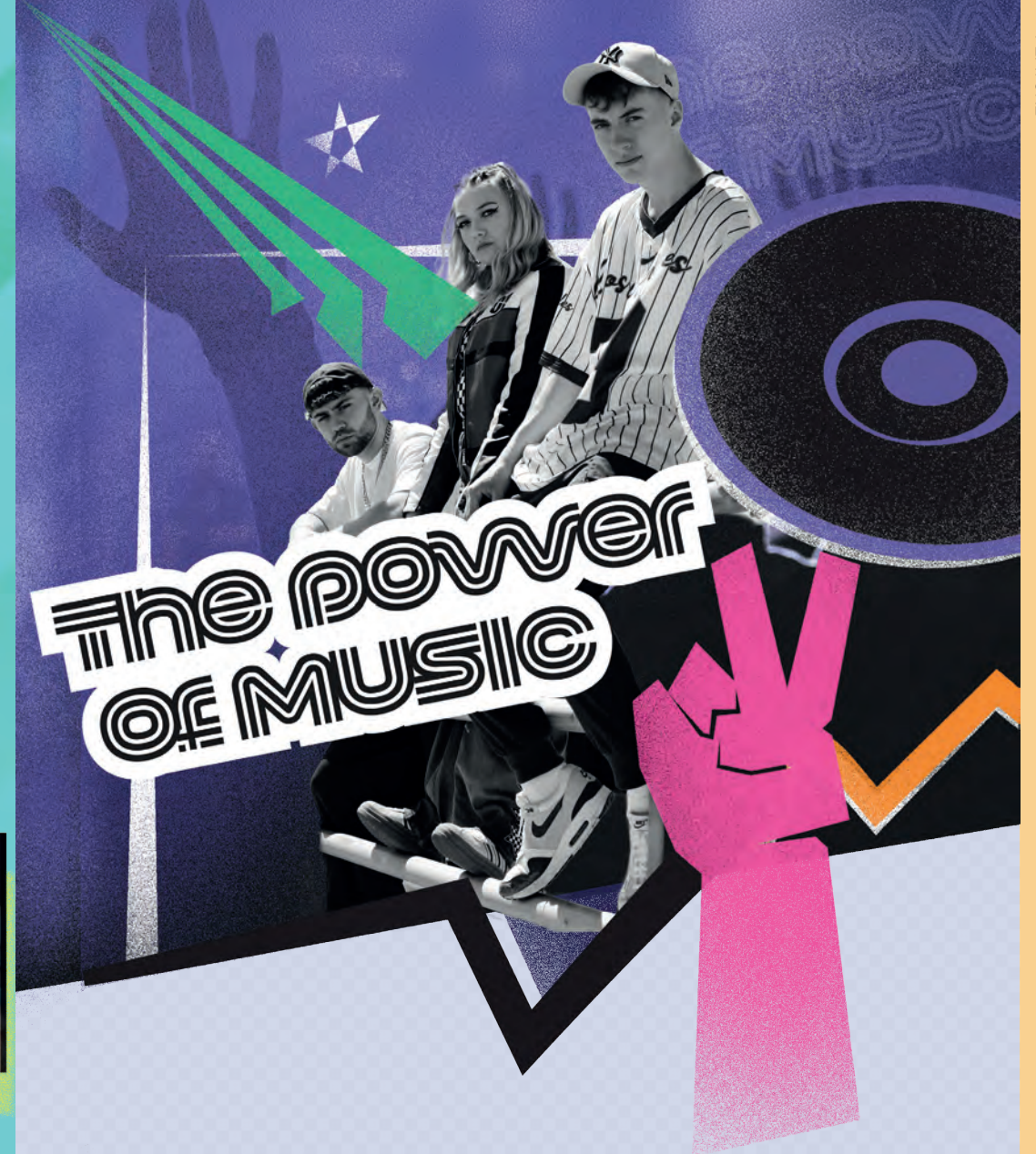
'I never dreamt life could be this good. Jesus is now my life, and I want to use every day to tell people about him and how he's changed my story. Every day, I pray for opportunities to tell someone about God, and time and again he gives me chances to do just that. Last December, instead of spending the build-up to Christmas sitting in a prison cell as I had so many times before, I got the

chance to go to Uganda and get involved in a mission week with the Message hub there. What a privilege it was to go into a prison to share my story with the men and tell them how they are loved unconditionally by Jesus and how their future can have hope.

'Looking back, I can't believe I'm the same guy that used to feel unlovable. Thank you, Jesus.' 



WATCH BOBBY'S FULL STORY
message.org.uk/bobby



Meet Evy, Ty and Jacob who together make up mission band NXT CHAPTR and spend every day out on mission sharing the hope Jesus offers with young people

FROM the days of the World Wide Message Tribe, music has always been at the heart of the Message's mission. And today it's no different with our bands still sharing the love and hope Jesus offers in lessons, at gigs and

through their gospel-packed music. As their tracks like 'Heaven Made It Easy' and 'My History' speak truth into teenagers' lives, we caught up with NXT CHAPTR to hear more. >

TELL US A BIT ABOUT NXT CHAPTER AND WHAT YOU DO.

TY: 'We spend our days heading into schools delivering hot-topic lessons, but in a creative way. We use our music as a way into helping students with some of the issues they face, things like low self-esteem, knife crime and bullying. As we do this, we see many engage in a way they haven't before. And once we've grabbed their attention, we go on to share our stories of how Jesus has helped us through life's struggles and how this hope is available for everyone.'

EVY: 'But we don't stop there. We want every young person we see in school to hear the gospel, respond to it and get connected with the local church, so every tour ends with an evangelistic gig. Here, as students see us perform more of our music, they hear about Jesus' love for them, and how each of them can make the decision to follow him. And as they respond, they're given a Bible and invited to the church follow-up being run by the same youth leaders they've seen in school. This is what it's all about! Seeing young people's lives turned around by God. It's why we do what we do.'

HOW IS YOUR MUSIC DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HEAR ELSEWHERE?

JACOB: 'Our songs cover a range of genres making it accessible to many, so whatever type of music young people are into, they tell us how much they love

the tracks we perform. But what sets our music apart is that it's all explicitly about Jesus. All our lyrics talk about Jesus, the hope he offers and our identity in him. None of them shy away from the gospel, because we want young people to be impacted by truth as they listen.'

TY: 'I know this is the type of music I'd have loved to have had available to me as a teenager. As we chat to students and teachers, you can see that they're impacted by lines like 'Jesus gave me a life worth living.'

EVY: 'I love the conversations we get in school. We were in Cardiff recently, and at the end of a lesson, a girl came up to us and asked what inspired us to write songs about Jesus. As we told her about the hope we want to share through our music, she asked, 'so is Jesus the only way?' This opened up a chance for us to share the gospel with her and invite her to the gig on Friday night.'

JACOB: 'We also get messages on social media telling us how people are impacted by the gospel as they listen. The other day, one

WHAT DO YOU SEE HAPPENING AS YOU STEP OUT ON MISSION?

EVY: 'I'm always blown away by what God does. My prayer every day is "God, use us. Use us to tell young people about you and speak truth into their lives." And he never fails to answer that prayer. Whether that's when young people realise they're not alone as I share my story, or as hands go up in the air at a gig when we ask young people if they want to give their lives to



LISTEN TO NXT CHAPTER'S MUSIC TODAY



lad got in touch saying, 'Y'all performed at my school today and were fire. As someone who hates that kind of music I very much enjoyed it and hearing it live is so good. See y'all Friday at the gig.' Another one of my favourite messages was, 'U guys changed my thought about God and I can now say I love ur music so much.'

Jesus. It's all about us saying "Here I am, Lord, send me" and him using the gifts and passion for evangelism and music he's given us to help young people find their next chapter. A chapter that's written in God and eternity.' **1**





PLANTING GOOD SEEDS

After an injury ended his boxing career, Ben got involved with the wrong crowd and his life spiralled into crime and addiction. In prison, he gave his life to Jesus, and everything changed. Now he's sharing his testimony and has seen his whole family transformed by Jesus

I WAS born into a boxing family with a lot of respect, and me and my siblings had earned a lot of national titles. I was pursuing boxing professionally when I had an injury at age 15 and had to stop. It was then that my life started to spiral out of control.

'I started to get involved with the wrong crowd and got mixed up in crime and addiction. Life felt like a car crash. My crimes just got bigger and bigger until I was arrested in 2023.

'Heading into prison was so hard. I was in such a dark place that I thought everyone would be better off without me. I struggled with regret, thinking about who I should have been and where my life should have ended up, worried about what my parents thought of me.

But then I started to read the Bible that was in my cell – mainly out of boredom – as I read it, I started to piece the stories together.

'One day I got chatting with the prison chaplain and she invited me to the Sunday chapel service. I remember my first day in



'I felt God's love and forgiveness fill my body'

the chapel; the Christians there had a light and a peace about them, and I had the same peace leaving. I wanted to find out more about it, so started going along to the different courses on offer and meditating on God's Word.

'I remember reading about the woman at the well and God spoke to me so clearly saying that he knew everything about me. This changed everything for me. I started praying every night, "Lord, I really want to believe this, but I don't yet. Help me understand and open my eyes and ears to you." And God answered my prayer!

'After going along to the Easter service in 2024, I left the chapel with a new revelation that Jesus died for me. I just knew it in my heart.

'Someone gave me a book with a salvation prayer in it and when I prayed it, I took full responsibility for everything I'd done in my life and surrendered to Jesus. As soon as I did, I felt God's love and forgiveness fill my body and it brought me to my knees. I knew I was set free from all my guilt and shame. That moment completely changed my life.

'I chatted with the chaplains about how I could turn away from my past and make a new start when I was released, and they told me about the Message's enterprise programme at Neal Street Espresso. >

'I can see now how God's had his hands on my family even before we knew him'



'I'm sowing seeds of the kingdom'

'When I left prison, I was free from addiction and trusted God with everything he planned for me. And Neal Street Espresso has been a place that's really helped me – I love it here! As well as giving me a job and training, they've been helping me grow in my faith.'

'The Bible study groups are a highlight for me, full of community. It used to just be three people going but now there's over 20 of us. My son even started coming along, found the Lord and recently got baptised!'

'In fact, 14 of my family members have now become Christians! Having seen such a difference in me, they wanted to find out more for themselves. God's shining his light into my family and restoring our relationships, and I can't wait to see the whole family come to know Jesus. I can see now how God's had his hands on my family even before we knew him.'

'In the past, when I was involved in crime and struggling with addiction, I was sowing seeds of negativity, and, as a result, my kids also got involved in stuff they shouldn't have. But now I know Jesus, I'm sowing seeds of the kingdom, seeing good fruit already.'



'And those seeds are becoming good fruit in me too. I'm getting married soon, and I love sharing my testimony with others to tell them about how amazing God is. I've shared my story with the police, and I've also been into a prison to encourage people there too. One man I met started coming to the Bible study at Neal Street Espresso when he was released, off the back of what I shared!'

'I can see where God's been planting seeds in my life and how he's been leading me back to him. So, I want to do that for others and plant seeds for the gospel because you never know what God can do with those seeds.' 🗨️



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR ENTERPRISE WORK
message.org.uk/enterprise



DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES

Message South Africa have just celebrated their 12th birthday! For over a decade, the team have grabbed every opportunity to share the love of Jesus

THROUGH Community Hubs which create safe spaces for young people and their families, creative mission in schools and on stages, prisons work, and Gangstar enterprise cafés, Message South Africa have seen countless lives changed by the gospel and are seeing communities transformed by God.

One of those people whose life has been changed is Octavia. Growing up in a community known for high pressure, limited opportunities, and daily challenges, she faced a huge amount of hardship. Yet, in the midst of the struggles she was facing each day, Octavia found peace in God and loved being involved in her local church.

In 2022, when someone at church told her about Message South Africa's Community Hub in Parkwood (Cape Town), Octavia, aged 16, decided to go along and see what was happening for herself. As the team got to know her, they started supporting her in her studies, mentoring her and providing a safe space where she could grow and make friends.

She worked hard and graduated from school – something she once doubted she'd be able to do – but, instead of walking away from the hub after graduation, she felt compelled to return.

'Coming back to the Community Hub after finishing school wasn't just a decision; it felt like a calling,' said Octavia. 'I began volunteering at the kids' holiday clubs and Genetik Sessions workshops because I wanted to invest back into young people like the team had for me.'

'I FELT GOD CALLING ME DEEPER IN MY MISSION'

'Volunteering reshaped the way I see people, community and myself, and I learned that sometimes people don't need answers – they need someone who listens to them.'

'Last year, I officially joined the Genetik Sessions team, and got involved with helping to run the sessions and disciple the young people. My confidence really started to grow during this time, and I loved stepping into leadership. It felt like a full circle moment for me. >

I also joined a creative mission team and was part of a holiday club outreach in Citrusdal, which turned out to be life changing. It was during this that I met children and families who carried so much joy, even though they faced huge challenges. As we played games, worshipped together and shared the gospel with the children, I felt God calling me deeper in my mission.

'Seeing the children's smiles reminded me that people don't just need resources, they need love, hope and someone willing to show up for them.



'It unlocked something in me. I just knew I needed to take the next step and train as a youth worker.

'Having had the support and safety that the Community Hub offered me meant so much. Now I'm excited to be a safe person for any young person who needs support, encouragement and someone who believes in them, all whilst getting to point them to the hope Jesus offers.

**'I WANTED TO INVEST
BACK INTO YOUNG PEOPLE'**



**'I HAVE A NEW SENSE
OF PURPOSE'**

'Seeing people walk through the doors with hope – or even without hope but finding some – motivates me to be part of that transformation. And as their lives are changing, young people are also wanting to empower and support others. It's truly disciples making disciples.

'God's turned my life around. I have a new sense of purpose. I feel so thankful that I wasn't just shaped by the work of the hub here, but now I can be part of shaping it and shaping the young people who come here – all for God's glory!'



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHAT MESSAGE
SOUTH AFRICA GET UP TO AT
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SMALL THINGS. BIG IMPACT.

In a world that values the influential, loud and powerful, Sarah Small, Head of Eden, challenges us again how small, slow and insignificant is where it's at

ONE of my first cars was a Corsa, and whilst I'm ashamed to admit this, I'd regularly clip the kerb as I parked it up. The first few times nothing happened, but over time I started having to battle the car as it tried to head towards oncoming traffic. Ultimately it became too dangerous to drive and we had to get rid of it. I'm not sharing that so you judge my driving but because I've been struck again by how something small can eventually have a huge impact.

In Matthew 13: 31-34,

Jesus shares the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast with the crowd. But why a mustard seed? Why yeast?

In a world where

the large and prestigious were most valued, why did Jesus choose tiny, insignificant things when describing the kingdom of God? It's not Jesus saying that the kingdom is overlooked – quite the opposite, it's him flipping the script and saying that, in the upside-down kingdom, the small is what's important.

**'IN THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM,
THE SMALL IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT'**

What both the yeast and the mustard seed have is a fundamental power to transform. Every New Year, I set myself resolutions and end up getting frustrated at my shortcomings because whilst I may have the strength to do a few things, I ultimately don't have power to change myself. But in God, we all find a kingdom that is 'not a matter of talk but of power' (1 Corinthians 4:20). ➤





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Sometimes we can still misunderstand how God's power works and can fall into one of two traps. We can either find ourselves thinking that he's so powerful we don't need to do anything and we just sit and wait for him to come back and sort the world out. Or, on the other end of the scale, we can make ourselves too busy, as if God's whole plan of salvation depends on the rate at which we work. But neither of these are a position God wants us in.

'GOD WORKS THROUGH US, IN US AND WITH US'

Corrie ten Boom once said, 'Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.' Partnership is required. God works through us, in us and with us. It's not our own strength. Jesus' power is quiet, persistent, transformative from the inside out. But it takes a mustard seed to grow a tree. It takes some yeast that affects a whole batch of dough to make it rise.

But to bring about transformation, a mustard seed needs to be planted in soil and yeast needs to be worked into the dough. It's only as this happens that their power is released. They have to sacrifice their original state to bring about the change. And I believe the same is true for us – we need to be mixed in with society.

At Eden, one of our key verses is 1 John 1:14 'The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood' (MSG). We're called to proximity, in the way that Jesus modelled it, not just physically but in love. Proximity isn't just about the right postcode or spending a bit of time with a neighbour; it's attitude, it's heart, it's action, it's love – something we can't do from



a distance. And as you get close to people, it can be challenging as there can be a cost to this, but we're not alone. We have the power of God within us.

Transformation also takes time. Yes, God can do the miraculous, but in my experience, change happens over a period of time. We need to see God in the small things and not miss or overlook these. As Galatians 6:9 says, 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.' We're called to persevere as the kingdom of God will have an impact for eternity.

'WE'RE CALLED TO PERSEVERE AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL HAVE AN IMPACT FOR ETERNITY'

The question God kept drawing me back to is, do I trust him? Do I trust that he wants to work in my life? Will I trust him as I mix into communities where I am to be planted and rooted to have an impact for him?

I believe he's asking you the same questions. What will your response be? **1**



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