

# All the days of my life

## USERS' GUIDE

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### Finding faith in later life

***All the days of my life* is a resource produced particularly for ministry among those in later life. Its goal is to bring to light an awareness of God's presence throughout life as those who use it look back and facilitate a response of faith.**

For some with whom you will use the resource, that awareness of God will have been acknowledged and greatly appreciated down through the years. For those who have not yet come to faith but who have some previous background in church and knowledge of Christian faith, something of those seeds planted many years before may at last begin to sprout. For others, a previously unacknowledged sense of God at work in life's ups and downs will hopefully become clear for the first time.

### The idea behind the resource

***All the days of my life* is a six-session, light-touch, evangelistic tool walking participants through Psalm 23, offering the opportunity for a response of faith. It may be used individually, one to one, or in a range of small group settings in a church, residential facility or private home.**

It's simple, short structured content is based around an assumption of some familiarity with Psalm 23, but not dependent on prior knowledge. The content leans heavily on the use of imagery, both in the text and visual design, to open up conversations about real lived experience.

The flow of the resource moves deftly from a backward look at life in sessions 1–4, to reflect on the present through the lens of Christian hope in session 5, then the future and eternity in session six.

Throughout, the use of repetition in format and wording of questions and prayers is intended as an aid to recall and reinforce the basics of what it means to put trust in God through Jesus.

### The format of each session

**Each session follows the same format.**

- Beginning with a verse(s) from Psalm 23
- The introduction of a strong visual image to start conversation and bridge the gap between text and life
- The offer of a question to open up various aspects of the participant's life story
- A short piece of text which can be read with participants to raise awareness of some aspect of God's presence in different seasons of life with the aim of increasing recognition of him in retrospect, in the present or future
- The introduction of Jesus as the Good Shepherd from a selection of sections in the New Testament
- Concluding with a short prayer that can also act as personal response in the moment and/or build towards a full appreciation of what it means to profess faith in Christ.

## Facilitating the conversation

*All the days of my life* is not a Bible study with the answers in the back of the book for either those leading discussion or those participating in it. Rather, it offers a framework to carry a conversation in which real-life experience can be brought into parallel with what for some will be a familiar passage of Scripture.

Adopting a prayerful, gentle, conversational approach will create space for the Holy Spirit to work in his way and in his time. It will mean that those facilitating conversation will need to be comfortable with an approach which ensures a balance between creating time for listening, allowing for a range of responses to emerge and yet keeping the general theme of the session on track.

### Some advice for running the sessions with older people:

- **Keep it friendly:** Tea and biscuits and a comfortable chair are very important. Reassure people that there is no test, no expectation of 'right answers', just a chance to talk.
- **Keep moving:** Planning to deliver the material in half an hour may be long enough with the option of time to continue discussion afterwards for those who want to do so. Set a steady pace and don't rush the content. Give participants time to take it in, process it, reflect and respond. People may wish to take the materials home to consider further during the week.
- **Keep it visual:** The resource uses pictures, because they warm up conversation in a different way than lots of text and questions. They also help with remembering.
- **Keep it open:** Encourage people to spread the word. We have a life-giving message to offer. Encourage older people to invite their friends to come along with them to consider and discover Jesus.

### Our Shepherd before. His goodness and mercy following.

As you use *All the days of my life* with others, pray that they might come to find the comfort and strength of God as their shepherd in later life and the assurance of the goodness and mercy of Jesus ever with them, offering forgiveness for the past, peace in the present and hope for the future.