

the first of the 'Four Alls'

All Need to Be Saved

RACHAEL HEFFER



Rachael Heffer, Head of Mission for the Evangelical Alliance, explores how we should be both encouraged and challenged as we look at the mission landscape and how people are becoming Christians today.



We live in a time of rapid change, shifting identities, deep searching, and increasing disillusionment. Many feel the world is unstable – economically, politically, socially, and spiritually – and distrust spreads across generations. The Church has watched attendance fall for decades, while many younger people say they are ‘spiritual but not religious.’ Yet, amidst the challenges of life for so many, and of all ages, I believe we are seeing a shift: a rapid movement of searching and openness to the Christian faith.

For many, pain pushes them to search, and the good news of Jesus begins to make sense, often in unexpected places. For local churches, for Methodists, and for all Christians across the UK, this is both a challenge and a calling: to recognise the shift, witness what God is doing, and become greater places of welcome, truth, and nurture. We must proclaim again that all need to be saved and show authentically, in our lives and churches, how life and faith go hand in hand.

‘For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’

Luke 19:10

Below are five insights from the Evangelical Alliance's Finding Jesus Research: Identifying Pathways to Faith in Adulthood, based on nearly 300 adults who decided to follow Jesus within the last five years.

1. HOW PEOPLE START EXPLORING FAITH

In the research, 37% of new Christians said the prompt was ‘I needed help with life,’ 34% said ‘I was looking for meaning,’ 32% cited a painful experience, and 28% pointed to a spiritual encounter.

Many told us that on the surface they had it all - job, family, house, holidays - yet felt miserable, asking, ‘Why am I not happy?’ Churches need to create space for people in that place of searching. Our spaces must be open to all - safe for raw honesty, where life is messy, doubts are real, and all are accepted.

‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart’

Jeremiah 29:13

As churches, we have the opportunity to give time, be open for patient discussion, and show life lived authentically with Jesus at the centre.

2. WHY PEOPLE TURN TO FAITH

Of those surveyed, 39% said it was an ‘experience of God’ that led them to follow Jesus. 29% emphasised the importance of relationships with Christians who shared faith stories. 59% said attending a local church helped most, with members offering prayer, hospitality, or

simply showing up in hard times and 49% said reading the Bible inspired their growth.

As Christians, we must live in love and authenticity, letting faith be seen in how we suffer, rejoice, and care. Churches are encouraged to cultivate a culture of evangelism where everyone plays their part – praying, listening, loving, and being present.

‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another’

John 13:35

3. WHAT IS HELPFUL ALONG THE JOURNEY?

Alongside church and Bible reading, 42% said that they valued a course or small group, 39% spoke of having had remarkable spiritual experiences, and 37% cited answered prayer, hospitality, and generosity as being helpful in their journey of faith exploration. Notably, 59% reported their conversion took less than a year after they began exploring.

The lessons from these insights? We must meet people where they are, keeping multiple entry points open such as toddler groups, youth ministry or work with seniors, Sunday worship, small groups, courses, and mentoring. Let us be prayerful and intentional, offering scripture generously. Foster environments where prayer

is possible, where spiritual experiences are shared, and where Christians walk patiently alongside seekers. Celebrate small steps, trusting the Holy Spirit’s work.

4. WHAT PART OF THE GOSPEL RINGS TRUE AMID PAIN AND SEARCHING?

People told us that they were most drawn to God’s love, forgiveness, hope for this life and beyond, and being known despite imperfection. The gospel’s truth, beauty, and simplicity are especially attractive to young adults overwhelmed by a complex world around them.

Many participants we met came with anxiety, job insecurity, mental health struggles, broken relationships, feeling unseen. They found faith not through doctrinal answers but through grace: being forgiven, prayed for, accepted, and reading passages about God’s love, justice, and hope.

Our learning as the Church? In preaching, teaching, and daily life, we have the opportunity again to emphasise forgiveness, hope, identity, love, meaning, and justice. Encourage people to read Scripture not as a textbook but as stories of restoration, of God’s love and his heart for the broken.

5. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LOCAL CHURCH & INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS

The research shows that church communities are pivotal. Leaders should expect messy transitions for newcomers who may not fully understand their decision of faith. The Church's role in discipleship is crucial.

I recall visiting a Methodist Church where people welcomed newcomers with tea and listening ears. Someone asked genuine questions, others prayed, shared struggles, and over time one woman moved from anonymity to small groups, reading Scripture, and baptism. It was the community that carried her along.

Local churches need to equip members to ensure that newcomers are noticed, welcomed, and accompanied, often by encouraging members in hospitality and listening and reviewing discipleship pathways, both formal and informal, to mentor people, offer small groups, and develop deep, spiritual friendships. We learnt the importance of leaders looking to develop increasingly a culture not about performance, but about authenticity, journeying with individuals in friendship and love.

'Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God'

Romans 15:7).

CONCLUSION

All need to be saved. None of us, by strength or works, can reach God; all are offered salvation through Christ

alone. This message is needed more than ever. The Finding Jesus research offers hope: encouraging us that people are open; many explore faith because of life's challenges; spiritual experiences and relationships matter; the gospel of love and hope still rings true; church communities do make a real difference to people!

Hope compels action. For local churches: this is a season to lean in, to be hospitable, patient, and truth-filled. We may need to review our discipleship pathways so that we are open, discerning, and ready. For individual Christians we are called to live visibly, do life in the raw, share stories, listen well, and love tangibly.

In the Methodist tradition – with its emphasis on grace, holiness, service, and justice – we have rich resources to connect with people's longings for meaning, fairness, and community. Let us take seriously the calling that 'all need to be saved' by opening doors and hearts, speaking with love, truth, and authenticity. The harvest is often in quiet mustard seeds; may we see what God is doing, where he is powerfully at work, and join in.

RACHAEL HEFFER



Rachael serves as Head of Mission for the Evangelical Alliance where she seeks to resource and equip the UK Church in all forms of mission activity, to develop a widespread culture of evangelism, and to see Christian individuals grow in greater confidence to make Jesus known.

'Yet amidst the challenges of life for so many, and of all ages, I believe we are seeing a shift: a rapid movement of searching and openness to the Christian faith.'

